

THE TRUE  
Liberty & Dominion  
OF £.5.54  
Conscience  
Vindicated, from the  
USURPATIONS & ABUSES  
OF  
OPINION,  
AND  
Persuasion.

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Prov. xx. ver. 27.

*The Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord.*

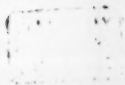
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THE

THE  
TRUE LIBERTY  
AND  
DOMINION  
OF  
Conscience.

CHAP. I.

*The Introduction.*



T is the Excellency  
of humane Nature,  
that all its Actions  
are the Effects of  
Choice, and not of  
Chance: and there-  
fore they are con-  
stantly addressed to some determinate  
End; this End is alwayes Happiness,  
B either

either Real, or at least that which Men believe to be so. Now for the more certain attainment of whatsoever kind or degree of Happiness Men desire, they alwayes propose to themselves, some Way or Rule, by which, they may direct and steer the course of their Actions, and Endeavours; which otherwise (like a Vessel in the midst of the main Ocean without Charts and Compass,) must be left to the mercy of all Accidents, and have only the bare possibility of uncertain Hazard, to conduct them to their wished Port. From hence it is, that there is no Art nor Science, Liberal nor Mechanical, but in the first place proposes necessary Rules, for the direction of those who are to be guided, or instructed therein, in order to the accomplishment, or attainment of their designed End. Now wherever there is such a Rule, in regard there are many wayes of Error, though, but one of Truth, and that nothing is more Natural than for Men to Err; by not attending to, or acting according to the Rule; there is a necessity of some Supreme Judge, who, by an impartial determination, shall judge all humane Actions,

*Humani  
num est  
errare.*

Actions, whether they are according to the command and direction of the Rule; and, by consequence, whether they are right or wrong, in order to the End which is propos'd and design'd. This Judge in the Affairs of the World, such as are Life, Honour, Riches, Fame, &c. is the determination of Reason, according to the best of every Mans knowledge and understanding. In the Concerns of Religion, it is called *Conscience*. This is that universal Monarch, whose Ubiquitary Throne is establish'd in every mortal Breast. To this the ancient Heathens owe all that little sence they had of Religion and Virtue. 'Tis this that makes the zealous Musleman adore the false *Arabian*, and his ridiculous *Alchoran*. 'Tis this, has rais'd the *Roman* Mitre to its Triple height; and in short 'tis *Conscience*, that has rent so many puissant Crowns, from his pretended Universal and Infallible Chair. Not that all these powerful Effects, have proceeded from a Conscience rightly informed, but on the contrary, many of them from a most barbarous and stupid Ignorance of the best Rule, by which Conscience ought to judge, and Men to act.

However, this does most manifestly demonstrate, the Sovereign and Imperial sway, which even a pretended and imaginary Conscience challenges in the management of all Humane Affairs.

It is beyond my Province as much as it surpasses either my power or hopes, in the following Papers, to think of regulating those mighty Evils, which from the want of a right measure of what is matter of Conscience, and what not, have overspread the face of the whole Earth: and I shall arrive at the most happy period of my design, if I can do so charitable a Subject as this is, so much reason, as to inform some, and convince others of my dear Countrey-men, that hitherto, they have laboured under some dangerous mistakes, in this great concern of Conscience: the fatal effects of which misunderstandings, we have by the most deplorable experience been too deeply sensible of already; and still lie under just apprehensions, by reason of the great divisions and distractions of mind, which daily prevail and increase amongst us, that the same, or (if possible) a worse Iliad of Tragical Miseries may be repeated over again.

Happy



Happy were that *Moses*, who could stand in this gap; and by seasonably interposing his charitable endeavours, successfully repair those dismal breaches in our Holy Church, which threaten that glorious Fabrick (and with it the State, which are embarked in one common bottom) with Ruine and Subversion.

The Sincerity of my Intention, free from Passion and Animosity, as from Interest and Partiality; the Excellency of the Design, which is the Publick, and by consequence the particular good of every Person; the pressing Necessity of our present Affairs; and the incomparable, and almost incredible advantages which may succeed; as they gave the first motion to my thoughts, so they still give me encouragement to hope the best, and that our wound is not incurable. Certainly, if there be any Balm in *Gilead*, to heal the ulcerated Sores of the miserable People of these Nations, it must be such a Medicine, as will unite us into one common Principle, whereby those mistakes, and misunderstandings, the principal occasion of all our differences, may be removed for the

present, and prevented for the future.

As for those Persons, whose Religion is their Interest; Zeal, Malice; and Gain, Godliness; those Profelytes of *Demetrius*; I am not over-confident, that this will be accepted of by them, as a Bill of Divorce, between them and those gainful Persuasions, which they have so unluckily espoused: however, Truth will prevail, and may convince, where it cannot convert.

But if they be resolved to raise Up-  
roars for their dear *Diana*, they are out  
of my Sphere; and must be left to the  
Town-Clerk, the Secular Power to ap-  
pease, and convince with such coercive  
Arguments, as indeed are more fit for  
them, because more powerful than any  
that can be drawn out of all the Arce-  
nals of Truth or Reason.

C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the Reason why there are so many Pretenders to Conscience, and of the Advantages they make of it, to promote their Interest, and favour their Designs.*

**T**Here has nothing made a greater noise for some Years past, in this our little *English* World, than loud Clamors about Matters of Conscience, for Liberty of Conscience, Toleration and Indulgence to Tender Consciences. Nor is it less obvious, how grossly and notoriously Conscience has, by some People, been abused. There will appear no occasion for wonder at all this, to any person who does but consider, what incredible advantages have been made of that single Word. I will not recount the prosperous Wickednesses of the late unhappy Times, in which the principal Actors and Contrivers, were obliged to that great Name, for the most of their Victories, Glory, Fame and Riches, and all those unhappy Triumphs and Trophies which they did erect upon

the woful Ruines both of Church and State : but let us consider the present advantages which are made of Conscience.

First, Conscience is a keen and two-edged Sword ; a Weapon both offensive and defensive ; and indeed nothing cuts so deep in vulgar minds, who are most apt to be afrighted with awful apprehensions of what they least understand. With this Weapon it is, that all Dissenting Parties in their Religious Wars, arm and fortifie themselves one against another : with this resistless Sword, they make no more to untie the most solid Arguments from Scripture or Reason, than once 'tis said the young *Alexander* did of the famous Gordian Knot ; who untied that with his Scymiter, which he could not effect with all his Curiosity. 'Tis with this victorious Sword they conquer and subdue ; and 'tis with this they do preserve their conquered Profelytes. I mean onely the Name.

Secondly, Conscience is a most invincible shield, a sure defence against all the blows of Adversaries : so that though Nature, Art, Eloquence, nay, and

and Scripture too, do all conspire to bring the most combined Demonstration of Truth and Reason against them, the mighty blow shall be prevented from doing execution, and be received upon this *Æs triplex*, this invulnerable Target; and 'tis no more but saying, *It may be so as you say; but it is against my Conscience, and therefore I cannot believe or do as you would persuade me.*

Thirdly, Conscience is a certain *Asylum*, an impregnable Sanctuary and defence against all accidents. Hither, as to their last refuge, all Dissenters retreat securely, and are at as much ease, and in as undoubted safety, as if both Heaven and Earth were entred into the strictest League, Offensive and Defensive (as they think they are bound to do) to protect and defend them.

Lastly, This is a never failing Cordial in times of suffering; and has a secret virtue to sweeten that, which of it self is most bitter, and insupportable to all the world. Thus an Opinion that it is for Conscience, can make the justest and severest of humane punishments,

ments, to pass over the palate, with the sugar'd relish of Persecution for the Gospels sake: Thus Death, though the deserved merit of Rebellion and Treason, has, by some, been styled Martyrdom; and the suffering Persecution or Death thought meritorious both here and hereafter. Nay, so strangely have some men been blinded with the opinion of acting for and by Conscience, as to pronounce Divine Vengeance, Mercy; so that a villanous Contriver and Actor of Murder and Rebellion, and an infamous Regicide and Usurper, though one taken away by the immediate stroke of God, the Sword of the destroying Angel; and the other dying with all the agonies of Mind and Body, shall yet be said to be gone to God, and taken away from the evil to come; and, which exceeds all belief, by the blasphemous Rhetorick of a Posthumous flattery, shall be affirmed, to rival the most glorious Jesus, and be set on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

For these and such like reasons it is, that all Parties, of whatsoever persuasion, pretend to so great a share and interest

*Ireton.*

*O. Crom-  
well.*

interest in Conscience. Upon this foundation, as they persuade themselves, they build the Pile of all their Religion; and from the Dictates of this supposed infallible Guide, it is that they receive their Principles, and to which they conform their Practise. Ask a Quaker, why he will shew no respect or reverence to his Superiors? Why he will not take a lawful Oath before a lawful Magistrate, though for the manifestation of truth, the end of strife, or the vindication of injur'd innocence? Why he admits of no Sacraments? or about any other of his Tenents. Demand of an Anabaptist, why he will not allow Infants under the Gospel the same privilege they did enjoy under the Law, though he must acknowledge the Gospel a better Covenant? Inquire of a Presbyterian, why he starts at the Surplice and Ceremonies? and any Sect, why they separate from the Communion of the Church of *England*? Shew them all the advantages of Union, both as to Religion and Policy; demonstrate all the dangers and inconveniences of separation: and yet for all you can say, after all their wild,

wild, roving, and unconcluding Discourses, Objections, Scruples, and Allegations, to winde themselves off from the main point; when they find themselves forced from one of their strong holds to another, and at last straitned by the prevailing strength of unavoidable and Dilemmatical Reason; the result of all shall be, that they are not satisfied in Conscience; or that their Conscience will not give them leave, to believe or do this or that to which you would persuade them. Though after all this, I doubt not to make it appear, that the greatest part of those who talk so loud about Conscience, I mean the Vulgar, who have little to say for themselves besides that, do scarcely understand the Word, and are absolute strangers to the true sense and meaning of the thing.

That such therefore as are not resolved to be wilful, may be undeceived; and that they may not give to this pretended Conscience a greater Sovereignty, than ever God almighty did design the true one, by setting it up as an Omnipotent Idol in their hearts, I offer this following Discourse; which  
if



if perused, with that sobriety and impartiality of consideration, as becomes a Concern of so great moment, may, I hope, conduce much to the present satisfaction of many, and the publick advantage of my Native Countrey; by removing the occasion of so many heats and animosities, separations and divisions, as draw their original principally from these mistakes about matters of Conscience.

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## CHAP. III.

*Of the great Influence which the true Conscience has upon all the affairs of Humane Life; and therefore the great necessity there is, that all men should be rightly informed concerning it,*

**H**AVING now shewn the great power of a pretended Conscience; before we proceed any further, it will be requisite to shew, of what concern it is for all men rightly to understand themselves in this affair of Conscience: which cannot be better done, than by displaying the powerful Influence, which Conscience challenges in the management of all Humane Actions. We will therefore briefly trace it, through its vast Dominions of Oeconomicks, Ethicks, Politicks, and Divinity.

We will begin then with private Families, and there we shall find Conscience to be the onely bond of Union, the onely maintainer and preserver of those respective Duties, which are owing from one to another,  
in

in those little primitive Societies of Mankind: And therefore we see where this bears the sway, there is always the most Domestick peace, concord, and tranquillity; on the contrary, where this Principle is wanting, neither the obligations of Nature, Education, or Reason, are powerful enough to keep men within the limits of their Duty: but *Cain* shall imbrue his hands in the innocent blood of his onely Brother *Abel*: *Amnon* shall commit a Rape upon his beautiful Sister *Tamar*: *Absalom* shall rebel against, and endeavour to depose his Father: in short, without a sense of the Obligations of Conscience, the Master of the Family will be unkind to the Wife of his bosome, cruel to his Children, tyrannical to his Servants: The Wife will be false and treacherous; the Children will be undutiful and unnatural; the Servants will be negligent, faithless, and disobedient; and all extremely vitious: And, in a word, there will be neither Order, Government, Peace, nor any kind of happiness, in these little Communities, without Conscience.

If we step out of private Doors into  
the

the wider World, we shall find, that without the ties of Conscience, to oblige men to their several and respective Duties, there would be no such thing as Virtue to be found in all Humane Race: and one might as successfully seek, and, it may be, more probably find, Temperance, Chastity, Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Magnanimity, Fidelity, and Gratitude, amongst the savage Inhabitants of the Woods and Desarts. Without this, men resign themselves up so wholly to the conduct of their blind Passions of Lust, Hatred, Anger, Jealousie, Fear and Despair, that they seem not onely divested of all Morality, but even of Humanity it self. Let the late discovered Inhabitants of the Western World attest this truth; amongst whom, for want of this, there was so little to be found of Morality, that had it not been for Humane shape, and, amongst some of them, the name of Religion, it had been impossible to distinguish them from the so nearly related Brutes; some of which wanted little advantage of them, but a Language to express themselves in, so as to be understood.

But

But leaving these barbarous Regions, if we come where Morality has civilized, and common necessity has united men into Combinations and Societies ; where there is the best establish'd Government, the most prudent and excellent Laws, for the promoting the common good, and securing every mans particular Interest and Property : yet still the great Obligation to these Laws, and this Government, must be Conscience : which seems to have been the Reason, why all the antient Lawgivers, in imitation of *Moses*, have pretended a familiarity, and frequent intercourse with the Divinity ; and therefore proposed their Laws to the People, as the will of the Gods, as being well assured, that no other Principle was capable of laying such a powerful Obligation to Duty and Obedience upon the minds of men, as such a belief. For all Obedience must be resolved into one of these Principles, Hope of Advantage, Fear of Punishment, or Conscience of Duty to God. Now if either Hopes of Advantage, or Fear of Punishment, are the onely Inducements to Order and

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Obe-

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C

Obe-

Obedience ; less degrees of this Fear, or however a belief that they are out of the reach of punishment ; or greater, though only hopes of private advantage, shall cancel all the Obligation to Humane Laws, and the publick advantage ; and, like an impetuous Torrent, shall violently break all the banks of Laws and Government, and tear up the foundations of whatever does oppose its furious rage. Nor was there ever any popular Insurrection, Disorder, or Rebellion, in any Nation, but took its original from one of these tempestuous Principles. Whereas on the contrary, no hopes of Impunity from Humane Laws, no private Interest or Ambition, can persuade a man from that Duty which he owes to Laws and Government, upon the account of Conscience ; nay, we have further seen, that Cruelty it self, with all its terrors and tormentors, has not been able to shake men off from this firm and solid foundation of fixed Obedience.

Thus we see Conscience the best preservative against the threatening dangers of Intestine Mischiefs ; nor is it



it less available against Foreign Force. For unity of mind, which is the genuine and natural effect of Conscience, is certainly the greatest policy, as well as strength, of any People; whereas Discords, Divisions, and mutual Dissentions, give all the hopes and encouragements to a Foreign Power to invade, and all the helps and advantages to subdue. This made the *Roman Eagles* stretch their victorious Pinions over the greatest part of the World; the civil Dissentions of their Neighbours amongst themselves, made many potent, and otherwise invincible People, become an easie Quarry to their ambitious Arms: And whilst, with a shew of Justice, they pretended to espouse the Quarrel of the weaker part, by overpoising of the Ballance, both sides, at last, became their prey, and thrust their own necks under the fatal yoke, which, by unity, they might easily have avoided. It is to this the *Ottomans* owe the prodigious successes of their prevailing *Crescents*, which had either never been so, or had long since been in their Wain again, if the Divisions amongst the *Christian*

*Princes* had not given them those great advantages against themselves. And if we consult the Histories of all Times, Places, and Nations, we shall find, that no People can bid fairer for their own ruine, or give a stronger invitation to their Enemies, than by their own Divisions and Dissentions. Nor did any Government suffer a dissolution, without these foregoing, and too often fatal Prognosticks, of its approaching Fall; *In se magna ruunt* —

Now there is nothing can beget, maintain, and preserve this necessary Unity, like the Principles of Conscience. This is that which cements mens Souls together with so close and indissoluble an union, as nothing is able to divorce them from, but what separates the Soul and Body. This begets true Love, and real Friendships, Knots never to be loosed, but with that of Life.

Lastly, Let us take a short turn within the Confines of *Divinity*, and there we shall find, that the Consciousness which men have to themselves, that they owe an indispensable duty to *God*, as their Great and Almighty Sovereign  
and

and Creator; and to all Mankind, as their common *Brethren*, is the onely true foundation of all the *Religion* in the World. Without a due sense of the first of these, men are Atheists; without the second, they are worse than Beasts; without them both, they would be worse than Devils, who believe, though it makes them tremble.

So that it appears, that without this inward Principle of Conscience, there would be neither Honesty, Fidelity, Justice, Civility, Morality, Policy, Government, or Divinity in the World, this being indeed the Foundation-principle of all these; and all other things without, but inducements, and persuasives to Goodness; which men may resist, and (though not without difficulty) overcome; but till they can flie from themselves, they shall never be able wholly to subdue, and conquer all the power and influence of Conscience: or though they may be so hardy to rebel against it, yet can they never be able to escape its Tortures and Punishments, but that of the Poet will be an universal truth,

Juvenal.  
Sat. 13.  
prose fi-  
nem.

Hostu

*Evafisse putes ; quos diri Confcia facti  
Mens habet attonitos, & furdo verberere  
cedit  
Occultum quatiente animo tortore fla-  
gellum ?  
Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo ſe-  
vior illis  
Quas & Ceditius gravis invenit &  
Rhadamanthus,  
Nocte, dièque ſuum geſtare in pe-  
ctore teſtem.*

Well rendred into *Engliſh* in thoſe  
few words of the wiſeſt King Solomon,  
Prov. 18. *A wounded Conſcience who is able to*  
14. *bear ? For let men ſay or do what they*  
*pleaſe, this Imperial Principle will rule*  
*in the minds of men, either with the*  
*Golden Sceptre, or the Iron Rod.*

## C H A P. IV.

*Some necessary and universal Principles laid down, upon which Conscience depends, and according to which it acts.*

Philosophy tells us, *Corruptio optimi est pessima* ; the best things abused, become the worst: there is no poison so invincible, as that which comes compounded with a Cordial, which by its treacherous agreeableness to the deluded palate, obtains an easie admission, and a speedy passage to the vital Spirits. It is therefore the common Interest of all Mankind, to endeavour after a true and right understanding of this Principle, which does so universally influence all their Lives and Actions. That we may therefore take a true measure of it, it is requisite that we consider of some common Principles, which are to be found in the minds of men; whether innate or traditional, it matters not; for from these, Conscience derives its Original: upon the belief of these it

does depend : and according to these, if it be permitted its native liberty and freedom, it always acts.

The first of these is, That there is one *Supreme Being*, which is the first cause of all other *Beings* in the World. And this is that which under various names and notions, has yet in all Ages, and amongst all Nations, past for the most blessed, eternal, and by all to be adored *Deity*.

Secondly, That this *Supreme Being* is of a most perfect and excellent Nature, infinitely happy in Himself, so as nothing can add to, or diminish his absolute and eternal Felicity. This was the Antient and Universal belief of the World concerning the *Divine Nature* ; Nay, *Lucretius*, a man not over kind to that which he calls *Gravis Religio*, endeavours to establish his *Demi-Atheism* upon this foundation : that the *Divine Nature* being transcendently happy within it self, since it could receive neither addition, nor diminution, therefore did not concern it self with the management of the affairs of the World ; as appears by those well known, and too much abused Verses of his

*Omnis*

*Omnis enim per se Divum Natura necesse est  
Immortali ævo summâ cum pace fruatur  
Semota a nostris rebus, sejunctâque longè:  
Nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,  
Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nil indiga nostri  
Nec bene pro meritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.*

Thirdly, That according to the excellency of his Nature, his Wisdom, Power and Goodness, he made all things, and Mankind especially for a most excellent End.

Fourthly, That this End was primarily the manifestation of his own Glory, in his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. Secondly, and in order thereunto, the Happiness of all his Creatures, according to their several capacities, either only here in this World, or if they be capable of it, both here and hereafter in a future state.

Fifthly, That therefore there is a future state after this life.

Lastly, That in that future state, there are Rewards and Punishments.

These several Positions, have a natural dependency and connexion one upon another, and are such, as have generally, if not universally been believed in

in the world, or at least by the far greatest part, best and most understanding of men: and indeed they are such Truths, as no man can deny any one of them, without the manifest danger of ruining all the rest.

Now from these common Notions, these necessary Consequences follow.

First, That all the Creation, and especially the Nobler parts of it, and particularly Mankind, owe, unto this most excellent Being, all Duty and Obedience, and such service as they are capable of and he requires.

Secondly, It follows that all the whole Creation, and particularly Mankind, ought, according to their capacity and ability, to promote the great Ends of the Creation, which are the praise and glory of the great, good, and wise Creator, and the happiness and well-being of the whole, and every part: And for this, Man may go to School to the inanimate Creatures, who all perform their obedient service, with the most punctual and exact decency and order, both for his praise, their own preservation, and the happiness of the Universe: according to that of the  
Royal



Royal Psalmist, *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapors, Stormy Winds fulfill his Word,* <sup>Psalm 148. 8.</sup> and praise his Name; strictly observing those Laws which at first he did impose upon them.

Lastly, it follows from the justice and power of this excellent Nature, that those parts of the Creation, which do, in obedience to his Will, endeavour to promote those excellent Ends and Designs of his Glory in the happiness of the Creation, shall, as the Reward from his Bounty upon their Obedience, be made partakers of that happiness they are capable of, and which, in his wisdom, he sees best for them both here and hereafter: And that those parts of the Creation, who, in opposition or contempt of so great goodness, excellency and power, endeavor to cross, hinder and obstruct these great Ends of the Creation, shall therefore be miserable, both here and hereafter, by the want of that happiness; as also, by such other penalties as the greatness of their Crimes deserves, and their Natures are capable of.

## C H A P. V.

*Of Conscience, its Description, what is its proper Employment; and the manner of its Operation.*

**H**AVING shewn what Principles are the foundation of Conscience, *viz.* a sense of that Duty which we owe to God, and to one another. The next inquiry must of necessity be, how these Duties are to be performed, so as they may be agreeable and acceptable to those to whom we are to pay them. And herein common Reason obliges us to believe, that we are bound to follow the directions of the *Supreme Being*, so far as he has been pleased to manifest his Will and Pleasure to us. Amongst *Christians*, the *Canon of the Holy Scripture*, has alwayes been taken for this *Rule of Direction*, as being the *Divine Revelation of the Will of GOD*. And who-soever does seriously and attentively consider the scope of those Sacred Writings, must of necessity confess them to owe their Original to the Divine Nature, supposing it such as has before been

been described, and universally believed : for all their Commands, Instructions, and Exhortations, are directly level'd at these great and glorious designs of the most excellent Spirit, by promoting his Glory, and the happiness of Mankind, both here in this life, and hereafter in the life to come. So that now having found we owe a Duty, and having likewise found a Rule for our direction, how we ought to perform this Duty, there will be no great difficulty to find what Conscience is ; for it is no other thing than that Principle which judges whether we have discharged our Duty according to this Rule, and these Directions.

I do purposely avoid the Niceties of the Schools, as too full of Curiosity, and not at all conducing to my design, which is to avoid all intricacy and perplexedness, and to give such an easie, proper, and natural description, and notion of Conscience, that every man may find it in his own breast.

Conscience therefore, is that Power which every Man hath within his own mind of judging all his thoughts, words and actions, whether they are agreeable  
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to that which is the best Rule, by which they ought to be directed. Thus from a belief that there is a *GOD*, and from the commands in *Scripture* to worship Him, and Him onely, my Conscience, or Power that I have of judging my self, immediately informs me, that I ought not to neglect his Worship, or to give it to any Creature: If therefore I do either wholly, or in part omit it, or misplace my Worship, my Conscience tells me, I have done amiss, because I have not followed the direction of the Rule. Thus from the belief, that I ought to contribute all I can, to the accomplishment of the great and good design of the *Almighty Being*, in promoting the happiness of all the parts of the Creation, my Conscience presently informs me, that I ought to do all the good I can in all senses unto all Men: And on the contrary, that therefore I must be careful to avoid doing any wilful injury to my self, or to any other person, whereby their present happiness may be impaired, or their future lessened or prevented; because in so doing, I follow the directions of the Rule, which only is  
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satisfactory to Conscience; whose office is to accuse me, if I do wrong; to encourage and acquit me, if I do what is right, and what I ought to do. So that to make up Conscience, there must be first, a true and exact Rule for all our actions, which we take the *Scriptures* to be, *as being*, as St. Paul saith, *sufficient to make the man of God wise unto salvation*, which I think is a sufficiency for a Rule beyond all exceptions; and they who expect a better Rule, certainly expect another End, better, I am sure, it is impossible: And, as before was intimated, if there were a necessity, it were no hard task to prove the *Scriptures*, in all particulars, the most excellent Rule for the management of all humane Actions, in order to the forementioned Ends of Gods Glory, and the Happiness of the Universe.

Secondly, There must be a true knowledge of this Rule, *Scientia* before *Conscientia*; which Preposition denotes only the private application of this knowledge to particular persons and things: for this is most clear and evident, that I must first know this or that is to be believed, or done, and after this  
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or that manner, before I can believe it to be my Duty, or be able to pass a judgment upon my self, that I have done well, or ill, in believing, or not believing, doing, or not doing any thing, or not doing it as I ought, according to the direction of my Rule.

Lastly, there must be an impartial and true judgment of my actions, by this Rule, that is, whether they have been according to the directions of the Rule, which is the proper employment of Conscience, whose work is to measure my thoughts, words, and actions, and to try whether they are conformable to the Rule by which I am bound to act, and according to that judgment either to absolve or condemn me for them.

Acts 24.  
16.

So that Conscience, thus properly taken, can only be exercised about such things as are certainly known, and by consequence, absolutely necessary to be done, for such are all and only the commands and directions of the Rule, according to that remarkable place of *St. Paul*, concerning his own practice, which ought to be a pattern to all men. And herein do I exercise my self, to have a *Conscience void of offence to-wards*

*wards God, and towards Men.* That is, the proper and peculiar Employ of Conscience, is to judge and determine, whether I do my Duty to God and my Neighbour, according to what I know is his Will revealed in his holy Word.

Now in regard, that upon this true Notion of Conscience, there lies a great deal of weight ; and it being the common mistake amongst weak minds, to take every thing which is offer'd to them as such, without a due examination, for a matter of Conscience in the strictest sence : I will endeavor to clear this Point, and make it appear, that Conscience is only directly concerned about such things as are certainly known, and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed and done, or not done.

First therefore we will inquire into the Nature, and, as I may call it, the Essence of Conscience.

Secondly, we will examine and consider its manner of operation and acting in all men.

Now the very Essence of Conscience is Knowledge, for no man can have a Conscience to himself of any thing

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which he does not know, nor of any thing further than he does know it. For Example, I know that *GOD is*, and that He is to be worshipped; and therefore my Conscience tells me, I am obliged to act according to that knowledge, and that I ought to adore him. I know that no Creature is to be worshipped with Divine Adoration, and therefore my Conscience tells me I sin against knowledge, if I give Adoration, by worshipping either Men or Angels, much more if I bestow it upon the more ignoble parts of the Creation, Gold, Silver, Wood, Stone, Creeping Things, Birds, or Four-footed Beasts. I do not certainly know whether Saints departed this Life can hear my Prayers, though made to them in the most modest sence, and in the same nature as I would do, if they were alive, beg of them to pray or intercede for me; and therefore, if I do not pray to them to pray for me, my Conscience does not accuse me of having neglected a Duty which I ought to have done, or sinning against my knowledge: So that it is clear, that to Know is of the Essence of Conscience, so that there can be no Conscience with-



without it. Now *Scientia est de certis & indubitat*, all knowledge is of certain and undoubted things; and this certainty, which is the foundation of knowledge, is grounded either upon the demonstration of Sense, Reason, or Divine Revelation; and whatever I know, it is because I have a certainty that it is such in its own nature; either from the evidence of Sense, which cannot deceive me, or from clear and plain Reason, or else from a positive Divine Revelation; which proceeds from him who therefore will not, because he cannot, deceive me, being Truth it self: And therefore if the things I would know, be either in their own nature uncertain, as are all future contingencies, and many past actions of former Ages, about which I want sufficient means of a certain information, I can have no knowledge of them; and by consequence, no obligation upon my mind, to believe them, or act according to them. But wheresoever there is a certainty of knowledge, either from Sense, Reason, or Divine Revelation, there my mind is not left at liberty; but has an obligation laid upon it, to act, or not

Rom. 14.  
ult.

to act, according to the commands of that knowledge. And that this is not my private opinion, but agreeable to the greatest Truth, let the most learned Apostle *St. Paul* give his testimony, in that well known place, *Whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin*. For by Faith there cannot be meant that supernatural Gift and Grace of believing to salvation, because every thing to be known or done, is not the object of that Faith: and therefore, as appears by the *fifth Verse*, by *Faith*, there he understands that *πανεργωζία*, that full assurance of a mans own mind, which is no other thing but the result of a certainty of knowledge of what he ought to do, or not to do, and is properly opposed to that doubting and wavering of a mans mind, occasioned by the want of knowledge; and therefore he tells us, it is a damnable sin to do that which I doubt I ought not; For, saith he, *he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because it is not of Faith*; that is, of a full assurance of knowledge, that what he does is lawful: for to such a person, till he have a full assurance from a certain knowledge that it is not, it is sin, because for ought he

he knows it may be so; and the Rule tells him he is to abstain from the very appearance of evil; and Reason tells him, *Tutum est errare à dextra*, it is the best to err on the right hand, by abstaining from that, which I am not fully assured of, but it may be sinful: and for this very reason the same Apostle tells us, that the occasion of those mistakes in the Church, about eating things offered in sacrifice to Idols, proceeded from a want of this knowledge: *Howbeit*, saith he, *there is not in every man this knowledge*; and for want of this, he tells them, *their Consciences were weak*; that is, their minds were doubtful, and some were of one persuasion, others of another about it.

So that knowledge being of the Essence of Conscience, and certainty being of the Essence of knowledge, it follows, that Conscience properly so called, cannot be exercised, but about such things as are certainly known, and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed or done; which plainly shews the unwarrantable doctrine and practice of some men, who impose many things upon People as indispenfible mat-

ter of Conscience, which in their own nature admit of the greatest doubt and uncertainty, and which they have no lawful authority to establish, as obligatory to the Minds and Consciences of Men.

But to confirm this, Secondly, let us examine the manner of operation and acting of Conscience in all Men: Now the exercise of Conscience, consists in these two things: First, I inquire with my self whether I have done what I ought, or abstained from what I ought? Secondly, I inquire, If I have done or abstained as I ought, whether I have done it after that manner, and with those due circumstances as I ought? Now in both these operations, the necessity of them is the Rule, and the foundation of that necessity, is my certain knowledge that they are so: for thus I judge, I have done this, because I certainly know in obedience to the Rule, I ought to do it: I have abstained from that, because I certainly know, that I ought of necessity not to do it: I have done it after this manner, because I am certainly assured that this was according to the way directed by my Rule; there-  
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fore my Conscience, that is my power of judging my self, pronounces for me, that I have done right and well: and then my Mind or Conscience being satisfied, I am at ease and quiet within my self; and this is called *a good Conscience*, or *peace of Conscience*. On the contrary, when I have done either what I certainly know I ought not, or but doubt I ought not to have done; or omitted what I am assured I ought to have done; or where I have not done what I ought to do, according as I ought to have done it, for the manner of performance, with all due circumstances; my *Conscience* tells me, I have not done well, or according to my knowledge, and therefore my mind is unquiet and unsatisfied, haunted with guilt of the evil, and terrified with the fearful expectation of punishment; and this is called an *evil Conscience*, or to speak more properly, *a Conscience of evil*. But if there be no command to act, or to abstain, nor any directions for the manner and circumstances of my Actions, I find no certainty of knowledge, and so no absolute necessity within my self to act, or not to act; to abstain, or not to abstain; or if I do

any such action where I am left at liberty, I find no necessity of doing it this way, or the other, but am left to my own freedom, because I have no certainty of knowledge from the Rule to determine me: so that if I do it, my *Conscience* does not accuse me; if I do it not, I find no uneasy guilt to sit heavy upon my mind for the neglect; and what way soever I perform it, still my mind is at peace and quiet with it self; and all because there is no certainty of knowledge from the Rule, and therefore no necessity or determination, and so by plain consequence, no part of the dominion of *Conscience*, for this necessity of knowledge is the *Law of Conscience*, and *where there is no Law, there can be no transgression*, no obligation, nor afflicting guilt.

Rom. 4.  
15.

Let not any person now think, that I have straitned the Diocess of this Universal Bishop, or, to speak without offence, this Overseer of the World; for thus far his proper and absolute Jurisdiction does extend it self: But *Conscience* has likewise a collateral dominion over all indifferent Actions, which is thus. All our Actions which may be done,

done, or not done, without sin on either part, are called Indifferent: As for example, If for my health or pleasure I design to take the Air, it is indifferent whether I ride, or walk, or whether I go into that fair Field, or this fresh Meadow. Now all these actions, though in their own Nature free and indifferent, have yet this necessity upon them, that they ought to carry a respect to the forementioned great designs of God's glory, and the happiness of the Universe, and therefore ought to be addressed to those ends, and managed accordingly: and if any indifferent action does not in some measure contribute to these ends, I am bound in conscience not to do it: Which seems to be the reason of the great severity our Saviour pronounces against idle words, not onely such as are contrary to those ends, but such as by their being incapable of contributing to those great designs, are therefore sinful and unlawful, because useless and unprofitable. Thus for me to ride or walk to take the benefit of the fresh and free air, though in its own nature free, and left to my choice;  
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12. 36.

yet I have this obligation upon me, that I ought to chuse that part, which either from my own, or better judgments, may be thought most proper, and conducive to my health, that so I may be in a better capacity to praise and glorifie my Creator, for, and by the advantage of health, strength, vigour, and alacrity of Mind and Body; and that by these I may be enabled, both for my own part, to participate of the bountiful happiness, which kind Heaven has so plentifully bestowed upon this life; and also, that I may be in a better capacity to promote and advance the happiness of my fellow Creatures, so far as my power does extend it self: and therefore in order to this, I am not to be injurious to any person, nor in taking the Air, to ride or walk over the cared Corn, or full grown Meadows; and all this, not onely out of an obligation to Humane Laws, or for fear of an Action of Trespas, a *Clausum fregit*, or *Pedibus ambulando*; but for Conscience sake, because I am bound by the Rule, to *do good to all*, but injury to none. And this truly explains the meaning of St.



St. Paul, in those two places, *Whether* <sup>1 Cor.</sup>  
*ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let* <sup>10. 31.</sup>  
*all be done for the glory of God.* And,  
*Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:* that is, <sup>Rom. 14.</sup>  
*Whatsoever* indifferent action I do, I <sup>ult.</sup>  
ought to have a full assurance, that it is  
not contrary, but conducive to this  
great design of the glory of God, in the  
happiness of the Creation.

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CHAP.

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## CHAP. VI.

*The occasion of those Differences amongst us, about matters of Conscience, proceeds from the mistake of Opinion, and private persuasion for Conscience. What Opinion is, and what Persuasion? and how they differ from Conscience?*

**T**HUS far I think it is clear what Conscience is, and how far its proper Dominion does extend. Now that Conscience thus rightly understood, does universally and absolutely oblige all men, I cannot think there are any will make the least scruple; unless it be such, whose Consciences are seared with an hot Iron, and given up to that unthinking sense, which the Apostle speaks of; and to those who are past feeling, I do not address myself, or this Discourse. But the misfortune of our Age does not lie in this particular; we may have some of those who have no Conscience; but we have multitudes of others, who are so far from having none, that they are all Conscience,

Conscience, who strain at every Gnat, and make every thing a scruple and matter of Conscience in the strictest sense: I do heartily wish, whilst they do so, that they do not swallow many a Camel, and in the end make shipwrack of true Faith, Charity, and; by consequence, of a good Conscience. For such as these are, were these Papers intended, with all Christian tenderness and compassion; if possible to give them a right understanding of what is so infinite dear and tender to them. For to my certain knowledge, as by much experience, and frequent conferences with many of them, I am able to affirm, most of this sort of People, who pretend to be acted by Conscience in every thing, are not yet able to give a tollerable account what Conscience is: 'Tis something within them, but they know not what; some of them, I am confident, are so stupid, as to believe it to be some living thing within them, distinct from both Soul and Body. And I remember a Quaker, to whom I put the Question a little hastily, *What was Conscience?* after he had shewn

shewn his great surprize and ignorance, by being in every joynt a Quaker, and the first that ever I saw do the trick, he very confidently, as well as blasphemously told me, it was the *Spirit of the Lord*. I demanded if he meant the *Holy Ghost*, the Third Person in the *Blessed Trinity*? To which he answered, *Yea*. Which makes me fear, that more, who are not of his persuasion, yet may be of his sence, and believe what they call Conscience within them, to be some Omnipotent thing, to which every thing ought to bow and obey.

There have been, and will be in all Ages, some men who do ill, with a design and knowledge of doing ill: others there are, who do ill, with a design of doing well: to both these it is, that we may ascribe those unhappy divisions amongst us, under the pretence of Conscience. And had they taken half that pains and care rightly to instruct People what Conscience is, that they have done, positively to tell them, This is matter of Conscience, and that no man can do with a safe Conscience; whilst in truth, they were either not matter of Conscience, in a  
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strict and proper sense; or if they were, they were such matter of Conscience, as all people were obliged to act in, contrary to both their Doctrine and Practise: I say, had they done this which was their duty, they might have done God good service, and promoted our common happiness, by Peace, Unity, and Charity: which now, to the great dishonour and decay of Christian Religion and true Piety, and irreparable mischiefs in our Politick capacities, are almost grown strangers amongst us. For whosoever shall, without partiality, consider the affairs of these Nations, for this last Century, shall find, That *Liberty of Conscience* has introduced amongst us the Synagogue of the *Libertines*, which now has more Votaries than the true Religion, and all others put together.

There are two things which of late have been obtruded upon us, (whether ignorantly or maliciously, God he knows) under the specious name of *Conscience*; and these are, *Opinion* and *Persuasion*: To this luckless Mother, and fatal Daughter, we owe all those  
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divisions, that strife, those bitter en-  
vyings, debate, variance, and, in truth,  
all those intollerable mischiefs, under  
which, both Church and State have,  
for many years, so heavily groan'd,  
and so deeply suffer'd. Some men, it  
is to be feared, out of Pride, Avarice,  
Ambition, or desire of Novelty, having  
embraced such Opinions, as were most  
suitable to their private Interest or  
Designs, presently usurp Heaven's  
Royal Prerogative, and stamp these  
courser Metalls with the Divine Im-  
press of *Conscience*; which immediately  
makes them currant Coin amongst vul-  
gar and undistinguishing Judgments.  
These Opinions, countenanced by the  
success of numerous Disciples, and  
warranted by zealous Defenders, and  
over-eager Promoters, grew amongst  
many into firm Perswasions; and ha-  
ving been rooted by long continuance,  
and naturalized by Custom, then they  
must be matters of Conscience, then  
they must be obliging to all, and give  
indispensible Laws to all: then they  
are to be defended, and maintained  
with Life and Fortune, and supported  
with no less rigorous Penalties than

• *Eternal*

*Eternal Damnation*, to all those who will not fall down and worship this golden Image of *Conscience*.

I will therefore endeavor to shew, what Opinion, and what Persuasion are; and how they differ from *Conscience*; how far they do oblige; and wherein their lawful right and dominion, in the management of humane Actions do consist.

Let us act like Men and Christians, with prudence and justice; let us *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars, and to G O D the things which are G O D S*; let us not blindly, injuriously, and dangerously, transfer the *Title, Dignity, Power, and Supremacy of Conscience*, the immediate *Vicegerent* of our *Almighty Sovereign*, unto these two *Usurpers*, who, in reality, are but his *Subjects*.

I will begin therefore with *Opinion*, as being the elder of the two: And that you may know, that it is far inferior unto *Conscience*, this is the description which the learned *Aquinas* gives of it, *Opinio est dispositio ad Scientiam*, it is a disposition to Knowledge; that is, *Opinion* is an imperfect degree of

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Knowledge, where still there is a liberty to doubt or suspect that this or that *Opinion*, may not be exactly true: As for Example, that the *Sun* shines at high Noon, this is demonstrative knowledge; but because the *Sun* when it shines, does communicate both light and heat; that therefore the *Sun* is a vast Globe of Fire, this is but *Opinion*; because it may be so, and it may not be so. Or that the *Moon* is peopled with Inhabitants, is but *Opinion*, because being capable of doubt; I can have no way to ascertain my self, of the truth of either of these, whether in reality, the *Sun* be a Ball of Flame, or the *Moon* another habitable Region: so that *Opinion* is that private judgment which a Man makes of things or actions which are of an indifferent nature, without any certainty of knowledge, where he wants the assistance of some rule or way, and means, to attain to such a certainty. And that I may not give only instances of Philosophy; thus, that there is such a place as Hell, the residence of the *damned*, is a matter of knowledge, as being of *Divine Revelation*, besides that it is founded upon the reason of rewards and punishments



ments in a future estate: But whether the Fire of Hell be material, or figurative, or both, these are matters of *Opinion*; and it is indifferent to believe either or both, because I am not positively directed to believe either of them, more than the other; neither if I do believe one of them, rather than the other, is any other Man obliged to believe it, upon my affirmation of one part to be my *Opinion*; but is still left at his liberty, so he believe any, to follow that part of the *Opinion*, which to him appears most; probable; and the reason is, because I want a certain *Rule* to determine me, there being no Divine Revelation of it, nor any way or means to attain to a demonstrative knowledge of it; and further, in its own nature it appears indifferent, whether those infernal Flames be material, or figurative, or both; since whatsoever they are, *God Almighty* is thereby able to accomplish his design, which is the punishment of the fallen Angels, and such of Mankind, as must there be eternally miserable and tormented, because they would not accept of happiness upon *God's* terms and conditions.

Come we now from *Opinion*, to *Persuasion*; which, as before was said, is the *Child of Opinion*: and is nothing more but that belief, which a Man embraces of any *Opinion* in indifferent things or actions, which are undetermined, by any certain way, or rule of knowledge, where the mind follows that part which appears most probable and likely to be true; so that in *Persuasion*, as well as *Opinion*, there is no absolute certainty of knowledge to determine the mind, only Men sit down with that as a determination for the present, which carries the fairest appearance of Truth, and with that rest satisfied; though still they reserve to themselves a liberty to change their *Judgment* and *Persuasion*, so soon as a clearer evidence, or better way to find out the Truth about which they are uncertain, offers it self unto them. Thus to one Man, the flames of Hell appear most probably to be material fire, because the Bodies of the damned, as well as their Souls, must be there most exquisitely tormented, and for that purpose, he thinks this sort of fire most proper; and therefore that part of the *Opinion*, passes with him into his *Persuasion*.

*suasion.* To another, who considers that the condemned Spirits, and Souls of Men which are of an immaterial substance, must there be punished as well as their Bodies, a figurative Fire appears most probable, and that is his *Persuasion.* To a third, who considers, that both Souls, Bodies, and the wicked Spirits, must have their share of pain and torment, both a figurative and material Fire seem most agreeable to the design, and therefore that is his *Persuasion.*

So that the difference between *Opinion* and *Persuasion*, seems to be no more than this, whilst I embrace, with an equal indifference, either part of a doubtful thing, it is but *Opinion.* When from the greater probability, I pass to a determination of my mind, then it is my particular *Persuasion.*

The difference between matter of *Conscience*, and matter of *Opinion*, or *Persuasion*, is, That what is matter of *Conscience*, is alwayes certainly known, and therefore absolutely necessary to be believed or done, or abstained from. What is matter of *Opinion*, or *Persua-*

tion, is not clearly and certainly known, but admits of doubting, and therefore is not absolutely necessary, but in its own nature indifferent to be believed or done.

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C H A P.

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C H A P. VII.

*How far Men are obliged by Opinion, or private Persuasion; and what influence these have upon Humane Affairs.*

**H**AVING now shewn what *Conscience*, *Opinion*, and *Persuasion* are, and how they differ one from another; it follows in the next place, that we shew how far these two last do oblige any person in the management of humane Actions relating to *Divinity*.

First therefore, every Man is obliged by his private *Opinion* or *Persuasion*, only in things indifferent in their own nature, and undetermined; which is the proper sphere of their activity, to act, or not to act; to believe, or not to believe; so far as in acting or believing, he does not contradict a known *Rule of Conscience*, which is an absolutely necessary Duty. Now the great and general Rule of all our Faith and Actions, being Gods Glory, and, in order to that, by our Obedience to his Commands to that purpose, to promote the happiness of

the Universe, both here and hereafter, it is very easie for any person, in any part of his Belief, or in any of his Actions, to see whether they have a respect to these ends; for if they have not, they certainly cross the great design and intention of our *Almighty Creator*, to whose *Will* we owe all ready Obedience; and then, by necessary consequence, they become absolutely unlawful. Thus suppose I am of *Opinion*, for very good and religious considerations, that I ought to keep one day in the week a voluntary day of *Fasting* or *Abstinence*, and I choose *Monday* as an indifferent day; I am obliged by my own private *Persuasion* to keep that day so; but neither my *Persuasion*, nor *Example*, can have any influence to oblige others to do so, who are not of the same *Persuasion* with me: But if either a Command from my lawful *Superiors* forbid me *Abstinence* on that day, or enjoin it to be observed as a *Festival*; or if I find, that by *Fasting* I impair my health or strength, I am then obliged to observe it no longer as a day of *Fasting*, because then my private *Persuasion* would cross a certain known *Rule of Conscience*, by  
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disobedience to *lawful Authority*. And I should also be injurious, both to my self, and, it may be, to many others, who may have a dependance upon my life and well-being; whereby I should act contrary to the *Will of God*, who would have me, by all lawful and prudent wayes and means, to promote my own happiness even in this life; and all theirs, with whom I have a Concern, so far as I am able by just and honest endeavors.

Secondly, every Mans private *Opinion* and *Persuasion* obliges him so far, as in the determination of his Belief, and Actions, it follows the better, more sure, and warrantable part. Now the better, and more warrantable part of our judgment and determination in indifferent things and actions, is first, that which has the Consent, Judgment, Approbation, Example, or Practice of the best Men, in all Ages, as nearest to the necessary Rule of Life and Actions. But because this cannot so easily be known, or found out, especially by the unlearned and ordinary sort of People, who have neither opportunity nor ability to discover what the Judgment and Practice

ctice of the best Men in forepast Ages has been, by searching the Histories and ancient Records of former Times; therefore secondly, that is the better, more sure, and warrantable part of our *judgment*, in indifferent matters of *Opinion* or *Persuasion*, which follows the judgment of *Charity, Peace, Unity*, and, by so doing, contributes most to Gods glory, by promoting the happiness of all Men, both here and hereafter: for these are universal Rules, and known Commands, and therefore necessary to be observed, being given us for the guidance and management of our Actions in general. Now there is no Man that has the free use of his Reason, and will make use of it, but may easily discover, whether any of his Actions are agreeable, or contrary to these *Rules*, and this great End.

So that it appears plainly, how different the *Obligation of Conscience* is, from that of *Opinion*, or *Private Persuasion*. *Conscience* obliges all Men, alwayes, at all times, and in all places, universally and absolutely, they being known, evident, and certain Duties, which are thereby commanded. *Opinion*  
and



and *Persuasion*, oblige only some private Persons, in some Cases, and at some Times, and never further than they have a just respect to some general *Rules of Conscience*, in regard they are not so certainly known, but that they may admit of Doubt, and have a possibility of being other than they appear, or are thought to be.

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CHAP,

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## CHAP. VIII.

*The Differences betwixt the Church of England, and all Dissenters, brought into Examination, by the forementioned Rules of Conscience, Opinion and Persuasion.*

**I**T is a Divine, as well as Mathematical Truth, *Rectum est mensura sui & obliqui*, a right Line shews both its own straightness, and the crookedness of that which is oblique: Having therefore shewn this *Rule of Truth*, and which I have not in the least endeavoured to warp or bend, so as to fit any private or sinister design of my own, or of any Party; let us now lay it to the Work, and it will quickly discover, who are *the Workmen that need not be ashamed, who have rightly divided the Word of Truth*; and have built upon that good foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, in beauty far superior to the polished corners of the Temple: And who are they, that have built Straw, Hay, and Stubble, such combustible stuff, as has set the glorious Fabrick of the Church into flames

<sup>2</sup>Tim. 2.  
15.

<sup>1</sup>Cor. 3.

<sup>12, 13,</sup>

<sup>15.</sup>

flames of *Contention*, and which to the loss of the Builders, must be burnt up; though they themselves may be saved, so as by fire, provided they did it ignorantly, and not of malicious wickedness, yet their work must perish.

We will therefore consider the most material, and chief things, which are in difference amongst us, and, by an impartial applying of this *Golden Rule of Conscience*, see who come nearest the Truth and Right.

I do purposely avoid the knotty *Questions of Divinity*, and the different *Opinions* about them, in regard, that these may be diversly believed and maintained without breach of *Communion*; and I know there are, and have been many eminent Men in the Church of God, who have wholly differ'd in their judgments, about some abstruse Points of *Divinity*, without prejudicing the *Peace* and *Unity* either of the *Church* or *State*: in regard they defended them only as their private Persuasions, and were both too modest, prudent, and charitably honest, to disturb the Peace and Quiet of the *Church* or *State*, by endeavouring to impose their particular judg-

judgments in things not clear and evident, as necessary *Doctrines of Faith, or Practice*, upon the *Consciences* of all other Men.

The main and grand Differences between the Church of *England*, and all those who have separated themselves from her Communion, so far as I am able to discover by the Writings of the several *Parties*, are either about the *Government* it self, or about the circumstances and manner of *Worship*.

1 Cor.  
14. 33,  
39.

That there ought to be *Government* in the Church, I suppose all *Parties* will readily acknowledge, because a great Apostle tells us, *God is the God of Order, and not of Confusion, in all the Churches of God*; by which it is plain, that that is no *Church of God*, which is not under *Government*; or which countenances *Confusion*; and therefore the same Apostle absolutely commands, *That all things be done decently, and with Order*. The thing that is complained of, is, That this way of *Government*, by the *Episcopal Hierarchie*, being no where in plain, and positive Words, and Commands, thus set down, ordered, and established in *Scripture*, which is the  
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*Rule of Conscience*, therefore it ought not to be imposed tyrannically and imperiously, upon Men of weak and tender *Consciences*; especially, when another, and better way of *Government*, more agreeable to the *Scriptures*, and *Primitive Simplicity* of the *Gospel*, is now found out, and discovered. For though *Government* in its own Nature be absolutely necessary, yet where *God* does not interpose any *positive* Command, or Directions, as he did concerning the *Jewish Church*, there this or that *Government* are equally indifferent, and the best is to be chosen and preferred before the rest.

How weak a Plea and Refuge this is, to call for and expect plain and express Words, Commands, or Directions from *Scripture* for every thing we do or believe, every Man must acknowledge who does but consider, that we owe even the Belief of some of the Articles of our Faith to consequences from *Scripture*, and not to plain, positive, and express words: As for Example, that of the Mystery of the *Glorious Trinity in Unity, three Persons, but one God*; which words are not to be found in all the  
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*Holy Canon.* How much more unreasonable is it then, to expect express Words and Commands of *Scripture* for *Government* in the *Church*, which is of a far more inferior Concern than *Faith*? And how dangerous a matter it is, to admit of this Proposition, *That nothing is to be believed or done, for which there cannot be brought a clear and positive place of Scripture*, let all Christians judge: And whether, if it were as heartily practised, as it is by some Men vigorously prest, it would not root out the very foundation of all *Religion*?

But we will join issue with them upon the Point, and give them a fair tryal at the *Bar of Conscience*, their own Judge, upon their own *Affertion*: If therefore *Government*, being undetermined by *Scripture*, be indifferent whether this or that; and the best to be preferred; How shall it be determined, and by what Authority, which way of *Government* in the *Church* is the best? For till there be such a determination, as before has been made appear, it can be no more than *Private Opinion*, and therefore can lay no more *Obligation* upon any Mans *Conscience* to yield Obedience

dience to it, than any other particular Persuasion does, which can only oblige those who are of the same Persuasion, and only so long as they continue so, and no longer, nor any others who are not so persuaded; and therefore by the *Rule of Liberty of Conscience*, are free, and ought not to be imposed upon, for fear of wounding their *tender Consciences*; which is the direct and ready way to have as many several *Governments* and *distinct Churches*, as there are Men of *several Minds* and *Persuasions* about which is the best; it being certain that if Men be left to their *liberty*, every Man abounding in his own sence, will esteem best of his own way, and according to the Proverb, *Every Crow will think his own Bird fairest*; which, in plain *English*, at last must amount to *Anarchy*, instead of *Unity*; and *Confusion*, in the room of that *Decency* and *Order* which God expects and requires in all his Churches. For the *Scriptures* leave it in suspence, and at least are silent as to most particularities of *Government*, there being no more plain and exprefs words for any sort of *Government*, which any of the *Dissenters*

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would establish, than there are for that against which they contend; and all *Parties* will plead the *Scriptures*, speak as much, or more, for their way of Government, than for any other.

Let us therefore try who will have the advantage, and bid fairest for such a determination, as shall oblige all mens Consciences, according to the forementioned Rules, how any indifferent matters of *Opinion* or *Persuasion* (such as the Question in dispute must be, according as they have stated it) become necessary and obligatory to all mens Consciences.

First therefore, we have reason to believe, that the way of Government now establish'd in the Church of *England*, is the best, because we find it does not contradict any known Rule or positive Command of Scripture; but, on the contrary, all its Commands, Directions, Doctrine, and Practise, are founded upon, and derived, if not from plain words, (as most of them are) yet from most evident sense, and consequences of Scripture; which, as before was intimated concerning the Articles of Faith, are as obligatory



tory to Conscience, as Scripture it self.

Secondly, This way of Government, as it is now established, appears to follow the better, more sure and warrantable part of our Judgment, in indifferent things, so as to make them become obliging, and that in both its branches; *viz.* First, it is agreeable to the Judgment, Approbation, Example, and Practise of the best men in all Ages, from the Apostolick times, as will be evident to all, who shall, without partiality, peruse the Scriptures themselves, where there are many not imperfect traces and footsteps of this way of Government, so far established, as the Powers of the Heathen Governments, who then had all the Civil and Temporal Jurisdiction, would permit. But there is a whole Cloud of *Witnesses* for it, in the universal consent, practise, approbation, and defence, of all those holy men from the Apostles times; who though not divinely inspired, yet were men of such eminent Integrity and Piety, as would not permit them to write any thing directly contrary to the Primitive truth, which some of them did immediately re-

ceive from the mouths of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord ; and many of them were such, as by Martyrdom did, with their dearest blood, set their Seals to the testimony of Jesus. Such who lived in those Ages, before *Rome* and her Bishops ever thought of usurping the Title of *Universal*, and therefore cannot be thought guilty of any combination with them, in erecting or imposing this way of *Government* upon the *Christian World*. Secondly, The Determination of the Judgment, that this way of Government is the best, follows the better, more sure and warrantable part, *viz.* the Judgment of Charity, Peace, and Unity : Charity, with the first, best, and past Ages of the Church, who all lived and died under obedience to this way of Government ; of all which glorious Martyrs, Saints and Confessors, it were the most uncharitable opinion to judge and condemn them, as being guilty of living and dying in, defending, maintaining, and practising a way of Government, altogether unagreeable and contrary to the Word and Will of God ; as all Dissenters would

would persuade the World, whilst they tell them, this Government is unlawful and Antichristian. It follows likewise Peace and Unity, both with that part of the Church which is now Triumphant, and with the Universal Church Militant, over all the World, who, except some few of the Disciples of *Calvin*, all agree in this way of Government.

Lastly, We have reason to believe this way of Government to be the best, in regard that it does more, than any other whatsoever, promote the great designs of the glory of Almighty God, and the happiness of mankind here, by Piety, Peace, Justice, and Unity, in order to their eternal happiness hereafter; following herein the Doctrine, Commands, and Example of the blessed Jesus, and his holy Apostles, without turning to the right hand or to the left.

Besides, We have other very strong inducements to persuade us, that this Government in the Church is the best, as being that which by Gods own appointment and approbation, was established in the very infancy of the

Church, by the Divinely inspired Apostles; and for this belief, these, amongst many others, are very probable and persuasive Reasons.

First, The great blessings which God has imparted to the World under this way of Government by Episcopacy; for it is notoriously known, that all the World, which did embrace the Christian Faith, received it with, and from this Government.

Secondly, which is very remarkable, and a confirmation of the former; It is impossible to find any Church, which wears an antient Name, and pretends to be of Primitive Conversion to the Faith of Christ, but how much soever they may have degenerated in other things, yet still they retain this way of Government: witness the *Roman*, *Greek*, *Armenian*, and even the barbarous *Russian* and *Æthiopian* Churches, who though in other matters they differ as wide in Opinion, as in Climate, which, according to the Adage, is *toto Cælo*; yet in this they do all most harmoniously agree, retaining both the Name, Dignity, and Office of Bishops, as the Governours of the Church

Church amongst them: And I do not know any one thing, excepting the Canon of the Holy Writings, which contain the Fundamentals of our Faith, which Heaven has appeared so solicitous to preserve unaltered and uncorrupted, as this way of Government in the whole Christian World.

Lastly, This very argument, which with so much pomp and triumphant solemnity, is perpetually, by all Dissenters, urged as invincible and unanswerable, if it be well examined, will depose plainly for Episcopacy, and that there is no positive Rule or Command in Scripture for it, is strong, and, it may be, a more powerful argument for it, than they who make use of it are aware of. And the true Reason why in Scripture there is no more said to justify it, with the highest probability, may be believed to be, because with a *Nemine contradicente*, it was by an unquestioned consent acknowledged by all those, who did embrace the Christian Faith; and there were none found then, nor in many Ages after, so impious or audacious to oppose or contradict it. And had there

been any thing in the Government, either unreasonable, or contrary to the will of God, the Jews and Heathens, whose hatred made them curiously inquisitive into whatsoever might appear a defect in Christian Religion, would certainly, with their quick-sighted malice, have discovered it, the discovery of which would have imported as much as they did desire, that was the subversion of the Church from the very foundation. But so great was the Unity of the Christians in this point, and so excellent and irreprehensible did the Government appear, that in all the opposition Religion met withall, though not an Article of the Faith could escape their censures, we do not meet with any thing against this way of Government; and well it was there was then such Unity: for could those Enemies of our Religion have met with half those divisions, which now Christians have made amongst themselves, they would certainly (without the assistance of a Miracle to preserve it) have improved them to the utter ruine of the Church, to which there is no Road leads so directly,

directly, as that which undermines the Government. In short, I do heartily wish, that all those who are so zealously, it were well if I might not say furiously, bent and opposite against Root and Branch of Episcopacy, would consider seriously at what they strike, and whether they do not really affront him, who, as the Root of it, is by St. Peter styled, *the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.* <sup>1 Pet. 2. 25.</sup>

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## CHAP.

## CHAP. IX.

*The pretences of Dissenters, that their ways of Government are the best, and to be preferred before Episcopacy, examined and tried by the same Rules above-mentioned concerning indifferent Things and Actions.*

**L** Et us now see any other form of Government in the Church, which can make so fair, so true, so just a plea for it self as *Episcopacy* has done; whether *Presbyterian*, *Independant*, *Anabaptist*, *Quaker*, or any other of what name or distinction soever, who dissent from the Church of *England*, and flie from her Communion, upon the account of the present Government by Bishops.

First, There is not any of these that can shew express words, or commands of Scripture, for that way of Government, which they would introduce: And therefore they are unjust to us, whilst they cry up their own way, and endeavour to impose it upon the world, as matter of Conscience; since,

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as before has been proved, nothing can be so in its own nature, for which there is not a plain and positive command, or a natural and true consequence, from *Scripture* the *Rule of Conscience*.

Or admitting their Proposition, That all *Governments* being in their own nature indifferent, and the best to be preferred; how does theirs appear to be the best? I hope they are better reconciled to common Sense, Reason, and Custom, than to think their own Assertion or Testimony sufficient to convince us that it is so; since the Son of God, who was Truth it self, yet tells us, *If I bear witness of my self, my witness is not true*; that is, if he had no other witness: And therefore he refers the unbelieving *Jews* to *John*, whom all men accounted a Prophet; to the *Scriptures*, which he bids them search; to *Moses*, in whom they trusted; and, in another place, to his Miracles and wonderful works, which they saw with their own eyes. Joh. 5.  
31.

Come we therefore to the common Rule; and it is no more but just, that they should receive the same measure, and stand to the determination of

of the same Judge, to whom they have made their Appeal.

In the second place therefore, Every one of these ways of Government which they would establish, with the ruine of the present, contradict a known Rule, nay, many plain Commands of Scripture; for whilst they go about to overthrow the old Government, and introduce a new One, they are *disobedient to those that have the rule over them*, both in Church and State, whom they found vested with that Authority, and which, for any thing they are able to prove to the contrary, was of Gods own appointment, for so saith St. Paul, *The powers that be are ordained of God*; even those Heathen and truly Antichristian Powers: how much more then the Supporters and Defenders of the Christian Faith? They resist an Authority, warranted with long succession, supported with many prudent and antient Laws; Laws to which they themselves, and their Ancestors, by their free Representatives in Parliament, had given their Vote and Suffrage; and therefore, by their own voluntary Act and Deed,  
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(and some of them by the stricter obligations of most Sacred and repeated Oaths) they were bound with the strongest ties of Conscience to live under, in all dutiful obedience; which *St. Paul* enjoyns under the pain of Damnation, the severest of all the penalties God Almighty can inflict upon Mankind: and therefore he tells them, they *must needs be subject for Conscience sake.*

Thirdly, in their determination, that their way or form of Church Government is the best, they do not follow the better, more sure and warrantable part of judgment in indifferent things. Let them shew us in all Antiquity, (except some mistranslated places in the *English New Testament*, where *Presbyters* are falsely rendred *Elders*) the least footsteps, approbation, defence, or practice of any other manner of Government in the Church for this Sixteen hundred years and upwards, besides the Episcopal; if they can do this, then they may lawfully pretend, they do not overthrow the Old, but revive it, by overthrowing the New Model of Government; but if they cannot, as I am sure  
if

Prov. 24.  
22.

if it could have been done, we had heard it on both sides of our ears long before this; let them dread the fearful doom which the wise *Solomon* pronounces against those who remove the ancient *Land-marks*, and are given to change; for their calamity shall come suddenly, and who knoweth the ruine of them both? Both of those who fear not God, because they fear not their lawful King his Vicegerent; but are given to change, delighted with Novelties and Innovations.

Lastly, this their determination is far from the judgment of Charity, Peace, and Unity, either with the past or present Ages; and much further from promoting the great designs of Gods glory, and the happiness of Mankind either here or hereafter. Let all *Europe* witness this sad Truth; and particularly these *British Isles*, which by this best way of Government, of ancient *Albion*, White and Happy, was changed into *Aceldama*, a dismal Field of Blood; it were endless to recount what Wars, Rapine, Sacrilege, Desolation and Confusion, Bloodshed, and most unparallel'd *Solemn Murder of Majesty*, the most sacred

cred thing on earth ; have been the effects of endeavouring to set up, and establish these new wayes of Church Government. And wherever any of these new Disciplines did prevail, they quickly verified the Advice of young *Rhehoboam's* hot-headed Counsellors, making their little Fingers, heavier than the Loins of Episcopacy : and changing the Whips, with which those Reverend Fathers chastised such as really deserved it, into Scorpions, Axes and Halters ; nor did they spare either Life or Fortune that stood in their way, or durst oppose them : And this was the true reason, why even those persons, who were so violent against Root and Branch of Episcopacy, notwithstanding their *Solemn League and Covenant*, yet their Wisdom, Fear, or Policy, would never give them leave to establish *Presbytery*, which they found a Government so imperious, absolute, and insupportable.

Nor is this fair and honest dealing, in Dissenters ; to pretend that because all sorts of Government are indifferent, therefore why should not theirs be chosen which is the best? when by experience

rience we have found the contrary, and in the mean time not to allow ours a bare indifferency: but to persuade their credulous Followers, with the greatest confidence, That our way of Government by Bishops, is *Popish, Unlawful, and Antichristian*, contrary to the *Scriptures*; and that their own way is agreeable to them, and the Primitive Discipline of the Church; and therefore as a matter of *Conscience*, and the main matter too, the one to be avoided, and the other to be embraced by all those who hope for *Salvation of their Souls*. That Cause (though it be the *Good Old Cause*) betrays it self to be very weak, which is to be supported by such unworthy, feeble, and Corner Arts and Arguments, as Pagans, and Heathen Philosophers would blush to have been found guilty of.

As for that common objection of theirs against *Lord Bishops*; we will easily grant them, that the Primitive Clergy did not abound in *Temporalities*; but then, they had such advantages, as, I believe, none of these People will be willing to gratifie the most beloved of their Pastors withall, when  
*they*

*they who had possessions sold them, and laid* Acts 4.  
*down the price at the feet of the Apostles, to* 34.  
dispose of as to them seemed most fit.  
This would be a hard saying, who would  
bear it? nor indeed could it be convenient,  
as the affairs of the World stand  
at present. But these Honours which the  
present Clergy do enjoy, being Temporal,  
are not by us believed to be at all  
essential to the Office of a Bishop, and are  
only annexed by the bounty of Princes,  
as are also their Estates, for the necessary  
support of the Rank they are in, for  
the encouragement of Learning and Piety,  
and for the advantage of the Publick,  
as it is a Politick Society of Men.  
And they may as well maintain a Level-  
ling Principle, and quarrel with all Hon-  
ours and Estates that are above theirs,  
as with these; for if any Temporal Estate  
or Dignity may, by free Gift or Succession,  
divolve upon a Church-man, why  
not these? And that this may happen  
without offence or scandal, besides the  
experience we have had in an Illustrious  
Peer of this Nation, who, not many  
years ago, from a private Priest, by  
succession, came to the Honour of one  
of the first Earls in *England*. I appeal  
to themselves, who would think it

Earl of  
*Kent.*

the greatest injustice, upon the account of their being Churchmen, to lose a good Temporal Estate from their Ancestors, or a Barony, either by Descent, or Royal Bounty. Besides, let all men judge, if this would not be the way to furnish us with *Jeroboam's* Priests, of the meanest and lowest of the People, not onely for Birth, but Learning, Parts, and Ability: And what a discouragement it would be to the Gentry and Nobility, who, by their Generous Birth, Advantageous Education, Noble Alliances, and many other Excellent Circumstances and qualifications, are fitted by the great influence they may have both upon the Prince and People, to do both the Church and State the most considerable Honour and Service? I am afraid few of them would addict themselves to the more serious and painful Studies of Divinity, if by their devoting themselves to an immediate attendance upon God's Altar, they must cast off the Entail of Temporal Honours and Estates from themselves. Nor does this derogate a little from the superlative Bounty and  
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Goodness of the Divine Nature, to think, that he who does so plentifully, frequently, and freely bestow these Honours and Estates, as blessings, upon all other Conditions of men, should prohibit and deny them to those, who have voluntarily obliged themselves to his peculiar Service, and upon whom he is pleased to confer the excellent Title of his *Ambassadors*; <sup>1 Cor.</sup> and therefore most certainly does allow <sup>5. 20.</sup> them honorably, so as to be able to support the Dignity of so high a Character: especially since they have his Royal word and promise for it, *Them* <sup>1 Sam. 2.</sup> *that honour me, I will honour.* Prince and <sup>30.</sup> Priest, were not by God thought inconsistent under the Law, in that Government, which he himself constituted and establish'd. And therefore one word in the Hebrew Language signifies both. And till such time as he is pleased to declare his mind to the contrary, I know not upon what pretence any man should divorce those two, which he had once made one. Neither by virtue of these Lordships, do Bishops Lord it over Christs Flock, as by the scoffing wantonness of some

men (who should be more serious, than to be witty at the expence of Scripture) they are said to do: since it is clear, that their Temporal Baronies give them not the least influence upon Church affairs, more than they give unto the other Noble Peerage of the Realm. And the Jurisdiction of a Bishop, as a Bishop, and a Bishop as a Baron, are as wholly distinct, as that of a Lord of a Manor, or any other Lord is from the power of a Bishop in his Diocess.

1 Tim.  
3.2.

In a word, *A Bishop must be given to Hospitality*; how shall he be able to do that without an Estate? If he must have an Estate, he must be Lord of it, for so is every man of what he does possess: and if it shall be thought fit by Royal Authority, the Fountain of Honour, to add to that common Right, a more particular and distinguishing Title of Honour, that may offend some mens Ambition or Envy, but can never be found to be either di advantageousto the Church or State, or contrary to the Scripture, the *Rule of Conscience*.

From what hath been said, it appears,

appears, that no other way of Government in the Church can really pretend to those advantages, which may make an indifferent thing become necessary and obliging to Conscience, except the Episcopal; by which it follows, that to submit to this Form of Government, as it is now establish'd in the Church, is so far from being against a good Conscience, that no man can resist it, without sinning against Conscience, since it has all the qualifications which are necessary, for the making an indifferent thing become obligatory to every mans Conscience, which all the other pretenders want: *viz.* It comes nearest to the *Rule of Scripture*, it follows the better, more sure and warrantable part of our judgment; it answers all the ends of Government, by promoting the Glory of God, and contributing to the happiness of mankind here, by procuring Peace, Unity, and Concord; and hereafter, by teaching, commanding, and practising true Piety and Holiness. And it is evident, that to dissent from this Government, can never be the effect of *Conscience*, but of *Opinion* or

*Persuasion*, neither of which can lay any obligation upon mens minds, which is absolute and indispensible, as before has been made most evidently appear.

I wish that all Dissenters would seriously reflect with themselves, whilst they do so violently cry up Conscience, and pretend it for their seperation, whether they have not abused themselves and the World, in mistaking *Opinion* and *Persuasion* for it? of which they may easily be satisfied, by an impartial application of what has before been said of this particular.

After all this, we shall difficultly be persuaded to relinquish the Plea of a Divine Right in Episcopacy, for which so much reason has been, and may be brought to prove it; and upon which we shall have occasion briefly to touch hereafter.

CHAP. X.

*Of the manner and circumstances of Divine Worship; and how from being indifferent, they may become necessary to be done, and obliging to Conscience.*

**T**HUS have we seen, that though private and false *Opinion*, or prejudiced and mistaken *Persuasion*, and, it may be, malicious *Design* and *Interest*, combined with discontented *Envy*, may be loud and clamorous against this Government of the Church, by the excellent and antient way of *Episcopacy*; yet *Conscience* is so far from being against it, that it is wholly and clearly for it. Let us now come to examine the manner of performance of *Divine Worship*, which has occasioned no small stirs, tumults, and divisions amongst us.

And here likewise I suppose, that all Parties do thus far agree, that there ought to be some Modes and Circumstances in the Worship and Service of God; that is, some Time, some Place, some Words, Gestures, Postures, and

Habits, for the performance both of Publick and Private Worship, which Conscience tells us we are bound to pay unto Almighty God. Herein likewise I suppose, that all Parties are agreed, that these things, or however, such of them as are in controversie amongst us, are, in their own natures, indifferent; and therefore properly the subject of Opinion or Persuasion: and were there no determination on either side, provided the Duty of Worship were performed, it might be done this way or the other: And from hence likewise it appears, that no Circumstance of Religious Worship, is in its own nature simply unlawful, because nowhere in Scripture prohibited, either in direct words, or by necessary consequence: so that no mans Conscience can be justly offended by the performance of any of them, since *where there is no Law, there can be no transgression.* Let any Dissenters therefore shew, either a positive command, or a plain consequence from Scripture, why I should not serve God in a set form of Prayers and Praises? or why I, or any other persons, should not perform all  
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the several Offices in the Book of Divine Service mentioned? Why such Gestures, Habits, or Signs should not be made use of? And then something is said to make them unlawful; then every man, in point of Conscience, would be obliged to abstain from them: but till that be done, they will remain in their own natures simply indifferent, and so far lawful. And so long as they are so, which will be to the Worlds end, they act falsely and unjustly, who endeavour to persuade weak minds, (and such as are not able to Judge) that these Circumstances of Religious Worship, now in use in the Church of *England*, are absolutely unlawful, and that they ought neither to use them, nor to have any communion with those who do use them; which is the true reason and foundation of their separation. And that the treacherous dealers deal thus treacherously with us, is plain; for that the Ignorant and Vulgar always make this their Plea, for their forsaking our Communion, that their Consciences will not give them leave to joyn with us in our unlawful Ceremonies, as, in derision,

derision, they call all the Service of the Church. And this they must needs have from their Teachers, who either ought not to have been Teachers, if they themselves were not come to the knowledge of the Truth; or if they were, they ought to have taught them the Truth; and that these Modes, or Circumstances of Religion, being in their own natures indifferent, were onely matters of *Opinion*, and not of *Conscience*, until such time as they were, some way or other, lawfully determined. And to prove that this they ought to have done, and more than this, have taught their Hearers, That they ought to have submitted to such determinations, I will endeavour to make it plainly appear, by shewing how indifferent Circumstances of Divine Worship become obligatory to Conscience, and so necessary to be performed.

Now all indifferent Circumstances in Religious Worship become necessary, if in general they answer the great Design of God's glory, and the Happiness of Mankind, both here and hereafter: it were enough therefore



to demand, which of all these indifferent things are contrary to these great Designs, and wherein? which I am sure it is impossible for them to make appear. But for the satisfaction of some, who may retain their prejudices, for want of a better information, I will shew more fully and distinctly, how indifferent things become necessary; with some short reflections upon such of them, as in the Ceremonies and Service of the Church of *England* are most objected against.

First therefore, an indifferent Circumstance in Religious Worship becomes necessary, if in general it conduces to the advancement of Piety and Holiness; because whatsoever does so, is absolutely necessary to be done; and it is every man's duty, to endeavour to promote goodness, by all lawful ways and means. Thus therefore, set and appointed times for Publick Worship and Service of God become necessary; such are the *Lords Day*, and all other holy Fasts and Festivals, in which People assemble together to call upon and praise God, and to give him that devout Worship, and humble  
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Adoration, which in duty they are bound to do ; where sin is reprov'd, the ignorant are instructed, the weak are confirm'd and strengthn'd, the Holy Sacraments, those Pledges of God's Love, and Seals of our Inheritance with the Saints in Light, are celebrated ; and all people are exhort-ed, directed, persuad'd, and encour-aged to the performance of their re-spective duties, towards God and all men. And that such set times are ne-cessary, will appear, because, were men left to their own liberty, when and where to perform these Duties of pub-lick Worship, such is the treachery and backwardness of mens natures, that if they were not determin'd by a necessity, they would generally neglect the Service of God, and find out per-petual excuses and evasions to delay the performance of it, to the great de-cay of Piety and Religion, and the great hazard of the salvation of their Souls. For this purpose also, publick Places of Assemblies, decent and con-venient for those uses, become neces-sary : and by such Dedication, and so-lemn setting apart to the Service of  
God,

God, they become his Houses, and cease to be common, or indifferent, by obtaining a Relative Holiness; such as did the ground about the burning Bush, the Temple and its Vessels, the Vestments and Chambers of the Priests; all which are called Holy: And therefore the Royal Psalmist does prophetically tell us, *Holiness becometh thy House for ever*; which must either be false, or else be understood of *Christian Temples*.

Exod. 3.

5.

Ezek. 42.

13, 14.

and 44.

19.

Psalm. 93.

ult.

Secondly, Indifferent things and Circumstances in Divine Worship, become necessary, if they promote *Peace, Unity, and Charity*, according to those great and necessary Rules of the Gospel, *Live in peace, if it be possible; as much as in you lies, follow peace with all men. Finally, brethren, be of one mind. Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Now remaineth Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity.* Now that one set and prescribed form of Publick Worship, Administration of the Sacraments, and other Religious Duties, doth extremely promote all these, nothing can be

2 Cor.

13. 11.

Heb. 12.

14.

2 Cor.

13. 2.

Coloss.

3. 14.

Ephes. 4.

3.

1 Cor.

13. 13.

be more plain: for where men are left to their own liberty, one likes this way of performance, another likes and prefers another way; from hence immediately arises a breach of Unity, from thence men come to Disputations and Controversies, which is the best way. And whilst each party is equally obstinate in the defence of their own Opinion, many heats of passion happen, which vent themselves in bitter words; from thence men come to variance, division, and separation; from thence to hatred; and then the door is set wide open to violence, force, confusion, war, and all the innumerable mischiefs, which are its dreadful consequences, and constant companions. That these are sad and experimented truths, I appeal to all sober and considerative men: but lest their Judgment should not be satisfactory, let us hear the judgment of an Apostle, who was guided in what he writ by an infallible Spirit; *But if ye have bitter envyings and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where envying*

Jam. 3.  
14.

envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisie: and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Nor is it possible to find out any way to make peace, and bring men to unity and charity, but by some determination of these indifferent things; which is not onely my sense and opinion, but that of all dissenting Parties, who therefore propose the determination of them, by the establishment of their way, as the onely expedient to obtain these excellent ends.

Thirdly, Indifferent things become necessary, if they promote Decency and Order, because so they are agreeable to St. Paul's general Rule, *Let all things be done decently and in order.* <sup>1 Cor. 14. 40.</sup> Thus, that all should kneel at the Prayers where it is appointed; besides, that it is a posture of supplicating, humility, and devout adoration; That they should stand up at the rehearsal of the  
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Articles of our Christian Faith, and at the Hymns, Psalms, and Praises, are all matters of great decency and order. Whereas that one should sit, another stand, a third lean, a fourth lie along at his ease, are no less indecent and irreverend, than disorderly and confused. Thus, that Church-men should wear distinct Habits, both when they celebrate the Divine Service, and at other times, such as may shew gravity, sobriety, purity, innocence, or distinction of degrees, are all decent and orderly, and so far therefore necessary.

Lastly, Indifferent things become necessary, if they be significantly expressive of our inward profession. Thus the Cross after Baptism, the Ring in Marriage, the Surplice and other Vestments, Postures and Gestures, having all their outward significations of the inward profession of our minds, are necessary for those ends. I should speak more fully of these things, had not the Learned Mr. *Falkner* taken such pains about them, and sifted them so narrowly,

as not to leave any just pretence of a quarrel against them; to which incomparable Discourse I therefore refer the Reader, for an ample satisfaction in all these particulars.

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CHAP.

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## C H A P. XI.

*Of the Way whereby indifferent things become obligatory to Conscience, not only upon a Mans private Persuasion, from the forementioned Rules, but so as to oblige all persons who live under Government, viz. by the Determinations, and Commands of Lawful Authority.*

**T**HUS far I have shewn the chief, among many Considerations, whereby any indifferent thing may become necessary: so that if any person finds these or any other indifferent things in the Worship or Service of God, conduces to these Ends, he is obliged in *Conscience* to the performance of them; but this layes only a private obligation, and the same that it does upon all other indifferent things and actions, which yet remain so, by being undetermined. But now in regard some of these things, though innocent and indifferent in their own Natures, may, to some Mens Opinions and Persuasions, appear very conducive to the beforemen-



mentioned Ends ; others may appear more effectual to some other Persons : lest from divers Opinions, about these Circumstantials of Religion, which are best, most decent, orderly, and edifying, there should arise division, distraction, and confusion in the Service of God, as by miserable experience we daily find there does ; it is requisite that we seek for some stronger obligation whereby those things which are indifferent may become necessary to all ; and this must be, by the determination, and commands of a *lawful Authority*, which has power to judge, which amongst all indifferent circumstances of Divine Worship, conduce most to Gods glory, and the good of Mankind, especially those under their charge and jurisdiction, by promoting and maintaining Peace, Unity, Concord, and Piety : and after such judgment, to pass a final determination, which shall lay the double obligation, both of a prudent and necessary *Law*, and also of *Conscience* upon all who live under their Government, and expect the advantages of it, and therefore owe Obedience to it. For otherwise disputes and differences must be endless, if

Men will not refer themselves to some Umpires and Arbitrators to decide them; which must (after Men have tyred themselves to find out what these Arbitrators must be?) at the last be *lawful Authority*. Now that all Dissenters are of the same judgment with us in this Point, and believe that a *lawful Authority* has this decisive Power, it is most plain, from the frequent instances, and repeated importunities which they make to the Supreme Authority, to make Alterations in the present, or to establish another manner or form of *Worship* according to their way: or however, if they cannot hope for such Concessions, yet they will Petition, that *Authority* will not interpose it self in these Religious Affairs, but leave them to their freedom in the manner of the exercise of their *Religion*; and this is, if I mistake them not, that which they call *Liberty of Conscience*: And they must either be the greatest Dissemblers and Hypocrites in Nature, by begging that from *Authority*, which they believe it has no real Power over; or else it plainly implies, That it is in the Power of a *lawful Authority* to determine that Liberty,

Liberty, in indifferent things, which concern the circumstances of *Divine Worship*. This therefore being acknowledged, we have nothing to do but to prove, That the *Authority* which has determined these indifferent things, and by consequence now made them necessary to be done, and matter of *Conscience*, had a just Right and Power, as well as wise and prudent Reasons and Considerations so to do, as being a *lawful Authority*.

We must therefore consider and examine what is requisite to make an *Authority so lawful*, as that it may of Right challenge such a decisive and determinative Power, as that all Persons who live under it, shall be obliged in Point of *Conscience*, to submit to its definitive Sentence, and take it for a *finalis Concordia*, in all indifferent things; and to which no Man can be disobedient, without a manifest and wilful sin against *Conscience*, in the breach of those known commands, *Obey them that have the Rule over you. And let every Soul be subject* Rom. 13.  
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*to the higher Powers.*

First therefore, that *Authority* which is of *Gods appointment*, is, without con-

1 Sam.  
26. 9.

controverſie, a lawful Authority, as pleading a Divine Right from him by whom Kings reign. Such was the Authority of *Moses, Aaron, Samuel*, and the Judges; and even of *Saul*, a wicked and tyrannous Prince, of whom therefore *David* ſaid to *Abiſhail*, *Deſtroy him not, for who can lift up his hand againſt the Lords Anointed, and be guiltleſs?* And it was well for him that he fell into the hands of a Man who was after Gods own heart. We have ſeen ſome, whom a leſſer intereſt than *David*s in his death, would have tempted to ſerve him as *Epaminondas* did his ſleeping Centinel; had they found him ſleeping, they would have been of *Abiſhail*'s judgment, and have left him ſleeping his laſt.

But to proceed, ſecondly, That Authority is lawful, which is warranted by long Succeſſion: Preſcription is accounted a good and ſafe Plea and Title, for all other Men for their Eſtates and Poſſeſſions; certainly much more for the Crowns of Sovereign Princes: for hereby their Title paſſes into Inheritance, which is a Right which no Man can violate or invade, without being guilty of the breach of that poſitive and known

known Command, *Thou shalt not covet.*

Lastly, *That Authority is lawful, which by Choice, and common Consent, for their mutual benefit and advantage, Men agree to, and by lawful wayes stipulate, and oblige themselves, one or more to govern, and rule, and the rest to obey:* for this is founded upon the Law of Nature and Nations, which teaches all People, that Faith in solemn, deliberate and lawful Contracts, such as this is, is most sacredly to be kept inviolated; otherwise there could not be any Society, Government, Law or Living in the World. And the Holy Writings confirm the same, when they tell us, our solemn Compacts and Contracts are to be observed, though to our loss and detriment, or else we must never expect to ascend the holy and heavenly hill; except we be such as though we swear, <sup>Psal. 15.</sup> that is, make a solemn lawful Contract, <sup>4.</sup> though to our own prejudice in the event, and yet nevertheless change not, but stand firm to our promise and obligation.

Now all these several wayes of any Authorities becoming lawful, so as to

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have a just Power and Dominion in making Laws for the determination of indifferent things, which, amongst many, are most conducive to Gods glory, and the Publick advantage of those under their Dominion, both in Civil and Religious Affairs, are most eminently to be found in the present Authority of these Nations.

First, there is *Divine Appointment and Ordination*, whether we respect *Monarchy* or *Episcopacy*? And if we can prove there were Kings and Bishops in the World, when *St. Paul* writ his Epistles, I think, notwithstanding what many have said against it, the Case will be clear; For, saith he, *there is no Power but of God*; that is, lawful Powers, such as the then *Roman* Emperors, who by succession became lawful; for we cannot imagine he meant to countenance unlawful and usurping Powers: and therefore he adds, *the Powers that be*, that is, the present *Roman* Emperors, and their subordinate Magistrates and Ministers, *are ordained of God, whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive damnation.* Now that there

there were Kings when he writ, is plain from that place, where he commands, *That first of all Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men, for Kings, and all that are in Authority.* If *St. Paul's* Writings were a Rule for those Ages, they are likewise a Rule for us, and for all People to the Worlds end; and then the Argument will hold good, If Kings in *St. Paul's* time had a Divine Right to their Crowns, they have so still, or else what was Scripture then, is not so now; the danger of which consequence is so apparent, that I cannot imagine there will be found any that will venture to own it. 1 Tim. 2: 1.

The great question will be, Whether there were *Bishops* then? For if there were, they likewise, by the *Apostles* Rule, were *ordained of God*, or else they had no Power. That there were *Bishops*, it is plain, for we have the Name very frequent in *Scripture*, Christ himself, from whom the rest so often mentioned derived their Office and Authority as before we took notice, being called *the great Bishop*, as well as *Pastor of our Souls*.

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And that these *Bishops* had a Power and Authority in the Church, and exercised the same office in the Government of the Church as the present *Bishops* do, is no less evident; and that in this very Point of determining indifferent things *in Divine Worship*: Thus *St. Paul* takes upon him to order the Church of the *Corinthians*, about the Celebration of the *Lords Supper*; and after that done, tells them, *If there were any other thing in difference or disorder, the rest will I set in order when I come.* And that he did this by virtue of his Office, and by a Power derived from Christ, the first and great *Bishop*, he tells them, *That he received of the Lord, that which he delivered unto them*: And wherever he is positive in giving any Rules or Directions of Government, Decency, or Order, we may assure our selves he does it by virtue of this Power of his Office; for otherwise he would tell us, it is but his private Judgment or Persuasion, which he would not impose upon Christians, though he had a fair pretence so to do, as appears by that place concerning *Virginity and Marriage*: Now concerning *Virgins*, I have no Commandment of

1 Cor.  
11.34.

Ver. 23.

2 Cor.  
7. 25.



of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy to be faithful. But if any Person shall pretend he did this by virtue of his *Apostolical Office*, which was an immediate Commission from the mouth of Christ at his miraculous Conversion; to convince them that a *Bishop*, who was no *Apostle*, had the same Power, and exercised the same Office, there is nothing more plain, than that place in his *Epistle to Titus*: For this purpose left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City; in which place I think our *English Translation* has not rightly expressed the meaning of the *Original Greek*. And this seems to be the proper sense of the words; that *St. Paul* having been himself in *Crete*, and set many things in order, he left *Titus* there, to place such Priests as he before had Ordained, in the several Cities of that Island; and put them into the Power and Office of *Bishops*, which he had not done, as may appear by the following description of a *Bishop*, what manner of Man he ought to be; and for the word *πρεσβυτέρους*, which is Translated *Elders*, it signifies

Tit. 1.5.

The word *πρεσβυτέρους* translated *Ordain*, signifies to constitute and appoint a person over a certain place and employment.

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in all Antiquity, (the best Expofitor of the Idiom of words) *Priefts* who were therefore fo called, becaufe always choſen out of the ancienteſt Converts to *Chriſtianity*, and the longeſt ſtanders in *Religion*; and the Rule held good, concerning *Priefts* as well as *Biſhops*; that in their Elections, they ſhould not chooſe a Novice; that is, one lately converted, leſt wanting the ballaſt of age, experience and diſcretion; the height of ſo honorable an office ſhould puff up ſuch an one with pride, and ſo he fall into the condemnation of the Devil. And that *Titus*, who was the firſt or chief *Biſhop* in *Crete*, as well in order of place as time, and ſo had many inferior *Biſhops* under him, we have the Poſtſcript, or rather Superſcription of the Epiſtle, which for any thing can be proved to the contrary, may be as ancient as the Epiſtle; beſides, that he was the firſt *Biſhop* in order of time, we have the teſtimony of all Antiquity, who never once doubted the truth of it.

1 Tim. 3.  
6.

So that *Monarchy*, and *Episcopacy*, being then Powers in the World; and the Powers that then were, being *ordained of God*: it follows plainly, that they have

have a just and warrantable, if not an undeniable Plea to a Divine Right.

Secondly, There is long succession of both: of this very Race of Kings for above 600 years: and long may their Imperial Crown and Royal Dignity flourish and increase; even so long as *the Sun and the Moon endure*: And for the succession of *Bishops*, it is of much an ancients date; and though the time be not certain, yet that the *Britains* did very early receive *the Christian Faith*, and with it *Episcopal Government*, is a thing not to be doubted, if we will give any credit to the *ancient Historians*, some of which would persuade us, that *Britain* was *Christian* as soon, or even before *Rome* it self.

Lastly, there is *Choice*, and a freedom of Election in the *House of Commons*, which represents the gross Body of the *Nation*; and is one part of the *Authority* thereof: as for the Interest which the rest of the most *Honourable Peerage* have in the management of Publick Affairs, it being one of the dear bought Fundamentals of the *Magna Charta*, it was a thing never disputed till the late dayes of *Confusion*, when the very foundations

dations were violently torn up by the roots, with the Tempest, or rather Hurricane of Religious Rebellion; and I hope it will never come to a second Vote, that the House of Peers is useles to this Nation, or a Government without them.

So that here is whatsoever is requisite to make any Authority lawful, so as to have a just Right and Dominion over all those who live under it, for the final determination and conclusion of all indifferent things, both in Religious and Civil Affairs.

That this may appear plain to every apprehension, we will give an instance in a point controverted amongst us. Prayer is an immediate act of Divine Worship, and of it self absolutely necessary to be performed to God, who

Psal. 65. *is the God of all flesh, and therefore unto*  
 2. *him shall all flesh come;* because he hear-  
 Matth. *eth prayers, and his house is the house of*  
 21. 13. *prayer for all Nations.* But to pray in a set and prescribed form of words, or to pray as a mans abilities give him leave, or as it is called, by *Ex tempore prayer*, according as the present occasion may seem to require, are in their  
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own natures indifferent: and I doubt not, but if either be done with all due circumstances, they may be acceptable to God. But now one man is persuaded, that set forms in the public service of God are the best, another thinks, *Ex tempore prayer* the best way. So long as this is undetermined by a Lawful Authority, every man is obliged to follow his private Opinion, because Conscience obliges him to follow that determination of his judgment in indifferent things, which he is fully persuaded is the best, and conduces most effectually to God's glory, and the promoting of Piety. But because diversity of Opinion, Persuasion, and Practice in this Duty, is apt to breed Division and Dissention; and to prejudice, if not ruine that Unity, Peace, Charity, and Order, which ought to be preserved inviolate amongst all men, especially Christians; therefore that Authority, which has a just power over us, as being of God's appointment, of long succession, and of our own choice; to prevent these disorders, and the confusion and dangers which may ensue upon divisions of Mind,

Mind, and difference of Practice, interposeth it self: and considering, that our great Lord and Saviour, who tells us, he was to be our Example, prescribed a set form of Prayer, and positively commanded his Disciples so to

Luke 11.  
2. pray, *When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.*

Mat. 6.7. That both the Antient and Modern Churches did, and do use and approve set Forms of Prayer in Publick Worship, that hereby, rash and inconsiderate men, shall not have liberty to utter any thing before God; nor to *use vain repetitions, as the Heathen did*; nor (which is much worse than they were guilty of in their much speaking, for which they thought to be heard) nonsense, indecent or irreverend expressions: that men of greater abilities should not be puffed up, and those who have not that freedom and fluency of utterance, should not be despised, in regard for their Piety, soundness of Judgment, integrity of Life, or ability to Govern, they may be of as great use in the Church as others. That hereby the ignorant and unlearned shall be better able to joyn with him that Ministreth, knowing what he is to say,

say, than if they did not; and with a safe Conscience may say *Amen*, which I am sure to every *Ex tempore* Prayer they cannot; and that all men may, by Uniformity, be brought to Unity, that so necessary Bond of perfection, both as to Religion and Civil Policy. For these, and many other necessary and prudent considerations, this Lawful Authority judges it most conducive to God's Glory, most agreeable to his Will, and most effectual to procure the happiness of those under their Authority, both here and hereafter, to prescribe and command a set Form of Prayer, in the Publick Worship of Almighty God.

And now that which before was indifferent, becomes necessary in point of Conscience: because the *Scripture* is clear in the case, that *Lawful Authority* is to be obey'd, in whatsoever it commands, that is not simply and absolutely unlawful, and that for Conscience sake; and the obligation which before I might have from my private *Opinion* or *Persuasion*, ought, in Modesty, as well as Duty and Charity, to give way to the Determinations of

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my Lawful *Superiors*, in all indifferent things.

And therefore they who, now it is determined, either despise it, or refuse to use it, or to joyn with those who do use it, sin against Conscience, because against many plain and positive commands of *Scripture* before mentioned, and for which St. *Paul* seems extremely solicitous, as well knowing Pride and Disobedience to be the most natural sins: and therefore commands,  
 Tit. 3. 1. that men be *put in mind* (as being apt to forget their Duty) *that they be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates.*

The very same may be said of any of the rest of those things which are enjoyned, by the present Authority of this Nation, which, by being commanded, from indifferent become necessary, and with such a dreadful necessity, that whosoever resisteth a Lawful Power, if St. *Paul* be to be credited, *shall receive to themselves damnation.*

And let them seriously take notice of it, how light a matter soever it may be made, there is no man who does  
 thus



thus wilfully resist and disobey Authority, that can hope for *Salvation*. As for those who do it in ignorance, I will not determine how indulgent God may be to them. But they must know, that though God may have winked at their former ignorance, yet now he commands them, and all men, every where to repent. And they will be inexcusable, if they be ignorant, because they will be so. It is their duty therefore, to look for a better Information of their minds; and laying aside all partiality and prejudice, to submit to the truth, how contrary soever it may be to their *Opinions*, which, by long continuance in, are become very strong and habitual to them: for without Repentance and Reformation, there can be no Pardon.

I cannot, without amazement, see some men, who appear in other things most nicely Conscientious, yet make so slight a matter of this; nay, many of them, the greatest and onely differing part of their Religion, themselves to disobey Lawful Authority, and by their Example and Practise, if not Doctrine, at least in private, to

teach others to do the same. I wish they would consider, what dangerous influences such Practises have had, and still have, upon their Bodies, Souls, Reputation, and Estates, and indeed upon every thing that ought to be dear and tender to them. Besides, the most fatal, mischievous, and dangerous consequences they have had, and, if pursued, will have still upon the safety and well-being of the Community in which they live: which, by their disobedience to Laws, the onely Fences of Religion, Life, Right, and Property, those *Deliciæ Humanæ generis*, the Darlings of all Mankind, they do as much as in them lies to ruine and destroy.

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CHAP. XII.

*Some Considerations, shewing the unreasonableness, and impracticableness, of the desires of those persons, who, under pretence of Conscience, are for erecting of new ways of Church-government, or for Toleration or Liberty of Conscience.*

TO shew the great unreasonableness and impracticableness of the desires of all Dissenters, there need no more to be said, than to make them this Proposal, which I dare say may most safely be done, That so soon as they shall unanimously have agreed in all particulars, and so as to reconcile all Interests, and satisfy all Parties, what way of Government they would have established, they shall receive a gratification of their desires; provided in the mean time they submit, as becomes good Subjects and Christians, to the present. And if they shall, in answer to the offer, say, That it is impossible to find out such a way of Government, as shall please all

Men, Interests, and Parties; would it not be the highest frenzie imaginable, by removing the present Government, of the goodness of which we have had so long experience, to introduce any other, which can gratifie but one, and, it may be, an inconsiderable Party; and, in recompence, disoblige all the rest; and, for any thing we know, even those who so eagerly desire it, as soon as any others, since having never yet made a full trial of it, though it may look bravely, like *Saul's Armour* upon *David*, it may not prove so easie or convenient, but, with him, they may be willing to put it off again, and stick to the old and plain Episcopal Armour of the Shepherds Staff and Sling.

1 Sam.  
17. 39.

Besides, this way of Government in the Church, is so curiously twisted and interwoven with the Politick Government in the State, that it is impossible to pick out this part, without spoiling the Beauty, and unravelling the whole Web and Frame of the Government; it is one of the main Pillars, upon which this weighty and well-built Fabrick stands; and cannot be taken away, but it must endanger the fall and ruine of  
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of the whole Building: and they must be as full of revenge, and as blind as *Sampson*, who would, by pulling down this Pillar, bring the House about their own heads; since it is odds, but, with him, they must perish in the common ruine; and I hope, what ever will they may have, their Hair will never be suffered to grow so long again, as to recover their *Sampson's* strength, so as to be able to effect it. It was this consideration which made as wise and learned a Prince, as ever swayed the *British* Sceptre, so frequently tell the Dissenters of his Age, *No Bishop, no King*: which by the most deplorable experience, was verified in his Successor. Nor did the fatal consequence end there; but after, *No Bishop, no King*, came marching up a dreadful Army of Negatives, *No House of Peers; No free, no full House of Commons; No Law, no Justice*, unless it were the *High Court* so called; *No liberty, no property, no safety, no security*, and, at last, *nothing but confusion*; all admirable effects of changing that Government, which before was most safe and easie, into that which was most Arbitrary, Tyranical,

nical, and insupportable. If experience be not sufficiently convincing in this particular, I know not what new School of Fools, or rather Mad-men, we must seek for, to persuade us to the belief of these Truths.

But further, I wish that all Dissenters would consider with themselves, whether this will lead them, and what must be the end of it. For a Toleration of Disobedience to the Commands of a Lawful Authority, is a Principle destructive of all Government, of all Religion, and even of that which these men would endeavour to establish: for we will suppose what they desire, that that way of Government, which they are so fond of, were, by the Authority, in favour of them, established and settled as firmly and strongly, as the present Church-Government is; it is impossible that it should please all people, nay, it is most certain, it would displease all other Parties, whose way was either abrogated to make room for the new one, or theirs which was rejected, and in probability therefore, the greatest part of the Nation: and there would not want those, who  
would

would be able to raise and manage more forcible Objections and Arguments against their way, than any they can bring against what is now in being. Now they must be unreasonable in the highest measure, if they would not grant the same liberty to others, who dissent from them and their way, which now they desire for themselves; since it is not to be doubted, but they would have the same (and possibly a juster) plea of Conscience for themselves, which these now make, and therefore ought to have Indulgence and Toleration: and I would gladly know whether that can be called a Government, or onely an Image of it, and an empty name, where men have liberty to obey it, if they please, or may be disobedient to it by its own consent, if they so please?

But further, what reason can they have to expect any other, having shewn them the way to change, but that the Authority should still make trial of new Governments, and not confine all their kindness to them, but still gratifie and oblige, first, one Party, and then another, according as the persons,

sons, who compose that Authority, may be favourably inclined to one persuasion or another? I hope they would not complain of Injustice in the *Lex Talionis*, or grumble to resign that Power, which, for their sakes, others before them were obliged to do. And should the Wheel turn thus round, they must with their way expect to be laid in the dust. And what strange Alterations, Revolutions, Settlements, and Unsettlements must there be? What face of Government, or rather what Confusion, must of necessity follow the Practice of this Principle?

And that these are the natural effects of Disobedience to Lawful Government, let us but turn our eyes a little backward, and we shall plainly see: And these Dissenters, however they seem to have forgot it, may remember they have seen the days, when the Presbyterian was in favour, and full of hopes, having troden upon the neck of dismounted Episcopacy, to advance into the Chariot of Government: but the crafty Independent coming slyly behind him, whipt up his heels, and laid him in the dirt; and was



was just going himself to take possession of the vacant seat, when the surly *Anabaptist*, *Quaker*, *Leveller*, and several others, rushing in all at once upon him, told him, with the Hand all the while upon the Hilt, that they had as just a right as he, and that they would not part with it, without a fair Trial of skill, who had the longest Sword? And there was nothing gave the late *Usurper* more trouble, than the importunities of these several Interests, which he kept from falling foul one upon another, by tollerating all for the present; and cajolling the Heads of the Parties with Protestations and Assurances, that in his heart he was of their persuasion, and, in time, would declare himself to be so: though for the present, in regard of the Malignant Party, it did not stand with his Interest, nor theirs, so to do, till they were more fully assured against the common Enemy: though at last they all found him to be a meer *Proteus*, or *Polypus* in Religion, and that he could change himself into the shape and colour of that Party which was nearest to him.

Lastly, Let them consider, That this  
Prin-

Principle must give increase, growth, and encouragement to all Sects and Heresies; since all pretend Conscience, and plead for Toleration. And if this Liberty of Conscience be granted them, there must of necessity follow infinite and unavoidable Divisions, Separation upon Separation, Confusion, and at last Atheism; since amongst so many pretenders to the true Religion, all will at last come to be suspected to be false.

These are certainly the necessary effects, and inevitable consequences, of unsettling the present Government in the Church, either by changing it for a new one, or permitting Toleration, or what men call, *Liberty of Conscience*: And we must either believe, that these Dissenters do not foresee, or understand the danger of this Precipice, to which they make such haste; or if they do, that they are the most malicious of Mankind, since they would sacrifice all *Law, Government, Liberty, Property, and Religion*, to their own private *Opinions and Persuasion*.

## CHAP. XIII.

*A vindication of what is before laid down as a fundamental Principle in this Discourse : viz. That God Almighty made Mankind for an excellent End; that is, his Glory; and in order thereunto, by obedience to his Commands, their own happiness both here in this Life, and hereafter in the Life of Immortality.*

**T**HUS far I have endeavoured to follow the Clue of Truth and Reason; which if others would likewise do, I doubt not, but it would bring them out of those Mazes and Labyrinths of doubts, which perplex their minds, and make their Lives so uneasy both to themselves and others, by making many things matters and scruples of Conscience, when in truth they were not such. And not onely so, but likewise it would conduce much to the calming of those storms and tempests, which are gathering from so many several Quarters, and seem to threaten both Church and State,

State, if not with Shipwrack, yet with most violent agitations and commotions.

But before I conclude, there is one thing which I have laid down as a fundamental Principle in this Discourse, and upon which a great part of this weighty building of Conscience does depend, as upon a main Pillar ; which I think it will be necessary to make clear and evident. And that is, That the great *Creator*, out of the Excellency of his Nature made the World, and particularly Mankind, for a most excellent End ; *viz.* his own Glory, and, in order thereunto, the happiness of Mankind here in this Life, as a preparative to Eternal happiness hereafter.

That this is a most certain and undeniable Truth, ( however some narrow-spirited men, who would engross all the Bounty of Heaven to themselves, may think otherwise, by taking such low measures of the Divine Goodness and Beneficence, as may be proportionable to the Stature of their own understandings, though far short of Infinite, which is the onely true measure  
of

of the Deity) I doubt not but to make it most evidently plain and apparent, to all those who do not wilfully close their eyes against the brightest beams of Truth, Reason, and Scripture.

First therefore, we must consider the Incomparable Excellency of this Infinite Being, who is the Author of all things; for he himself tells us, that *his* <sup>Psal. 57.</sup> *mercy reacheth unto the Clouds, and his* <sup>10.</sup> *goodness far above these visible Heavens; and that it is over all his works.* And lest we should be mistaken, by judging him according to our selves, he gives us to know, that *his thoughts are not as* <sup>Isa. 55.</sup> *our thoughts, nor his ways like our ways; 7, 8, 9.* low, narrow, and short: *But as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways and thoughts high above our ways.* A comparison large and wide enough, to shew us the vast disproportion betwixt Finite and Infinite Goodness. Now there can be nothing more suitable and agreeable to the Goodness, Bounty, Wisdom, Power, and Justice of his Essence, which is Infinite, than a Design, that all his Creatures should be happy according to their several capacities, which he, who made  
nothing

nothing in vain, created them with. And on the contrary, to suppose he made any thing with a capacity of enjoying any degree of Happiness, as its ultimate End, and chief Good; and yet with an intention and design, not onely of not attaining it, but of being forever miserable, is so far from magnifying his Goodness or Justice, that it would argue him of such a cruel nature, as were the highest derogation, and most proper blasphemy, to believe it of him. And that his Justice will be glorified in the punishment and misery of some of his Creatures, even of the Noblest Rank, he assures us with the highest protestation imaginable, is far from being an effect of his Will, and is perfectly occasioned by their own choice, and wilful folly. *As I live, saith*

Ezek. 33.  
11.

*the Lord; that is, as surely as I am, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn and live. Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? And if he has no pleasure in his death, a smaller punishment, undoubtedly not in his Eternal Damnation, the greatest of all miseries.*

But secondly, let us consider, That the

the scope of all Religion, and the Commands of God in Scripture, all aim directly at this White; *viz.* the happiness of all Mankind, even here in this Life, in order to an Eternal Happiness hereafter, in the Life of Immortality and Glory: and therefore does so frequently promise to the Obedient all those things, which may compose the happiness even of this Life; the *Bona Corporis Animi & Fortune*, all the good things of Body, and Mind, and Estate; according to that saying of the Apostle, *Godliness with contentment* (which it onely can give) *is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. 6. 6. 1 Tim. 4. 8. Now the means which God commands us to use, and the means which he directs, are the most certain Rule for us to make a Judgment, what is the End at which he would have us arrive. For God is true, and cannot lie, though all men may be liars, and therefore we are bound to believe him; and that he cannot tell us one thing, when he means another directly contrary to it: as some men, who call themselves Divines, have both by Word and Writing

ting publicly avowed, and publish'd to the World.

If we look upon the Commands of the Law, such as were not onely particular to the *Jewish* Nation in their Typical Service, but common to all the children of *Abraham* by Faith; we shall find, that they all aim at this: And the Two Tables, written with the Divine Characters, by the immediate Finger of God, direct, first, his Worship; secondly, man's happiness, by obedience to Superiours, in the first Commandment with promise; by Justice, Chastity, Temperance, Truth, and Honesty, and all other Virtues, which conduce to our happiness here in this Life: and by making us partakers of the Divine Nature, fitting and preparing us for the enjoyment of Heaven and Happiness hereafter.

And if we examine either the Doctrine or Practise of all holy Men, so far as their Practise is recorded for our example, we shall find, that they have all a tendency to these very Ends.

If we come to look into that *Royal Law of Liberty*, the Gospel, we shall find, that all its Commands and Directions,



rections, lead us to our own happiness: witness that Golden, and, even by Heathens, much celebrated Rule, of our blessed Jesus, *To do to all men,* Matth. 7. 12.  
*as we would that they should do unto us.*

A Rule to make all the World happy, and a Rule which, I am sure, no Dissenter dare abide by, and which surpasseth all that ever went before it, and is the highest exaltation of Humane Nature, even to such a degree, as brings it to a near affinity and resemblance of the blessed Divinity, who makes his *Sun to shine upon the just and unjust.* Matth. 5. 44, ad finem. *To love our enemies. To bless those that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.*

And the Disciples spake the same Language of their great Lord and Master, who left his Peace, and command of Unity, to *love one another*, as a Legacy among them; and enforces it upon them with the most powerful persuasive, *If ye love me, keep my commandments;* Joh. 14. 15. telling them, this love and unity should be the badge and distinction of their profession, *By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples,* Joh. 13. 35.

*principles, if ye love one another.* Thus therefore they command Piety and Unity, Peace and Charity, Love unfeigned, Obedience to Magistrates and Ministers; that Duty, Honour, and Respect, which is due to any, to be given unto them: to live Justly, Soberly, Religiously in this present World; in all Honesty, Quietness, Humility, Chastity, Temperance, and all other Virtues and Goodness, one toward another, and as we have opportunity to do good unto all. Let any man judge, if these Rules were exactly followed, if the Golden Age would not return, and all men be as happy as heart can wish. The Effects which they would produce, plainly demonstrate the Ends for which they were designed.

Besides, all agree to this, That the great design of the Creation was the glory of the Creator; now the same thing which glorifies the Creator, does also make the Creature happy; and that is, Obedience to his Will, Laws, and Commands. And that the Will of God is to be glorified by the Obedience, and not Punishment of his Creatures, as his first design in their Creation

tion has already, from his own protestation, been shewn. And the Apostle is as plain as positive in this point, That *God would have all men to be saved*, by <sup>1 Tim.</sup> *coming to the knowledge of the truth.* And <sup>3. 3. 4.</sup> for this purpose, that *Christ gave himself* <sup>ver. 6.</sup> *a ranfome for all.*

And whosoever does peruse the holy Gospel, shall be forced to acknowledge, that the whole design of it is, That all men, by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, might come to yield obedience to his holy Laws and Directions; and that by following them, they *might escape the pollutions and corruptions that is in the world* <sup>2 Pet. 1. 2, 3, 4, 5,</sup> *through lust*; and be made *partakers of* <sup>6, 7.</sup> *the Divine Nature*, by living justly, righteously, and Godlike, blameless and harmless, as the Sons of God here in this world: that so through the all-sufficient merits and satisfaction of the onely Son of God, they may, as the end of their Faith, Hope, Charity, and Constancy, be made partakers of that glorious Life and Immortality, which he has purchased for them with his most precious Bloud.

So that as nothing can be more su-

table to the excellency of the Divine Being, than a design in their Creation, that they should all be happy according to their several Capacities ; so nothing is more clear, from the unanimous consent and design of the Holy Scriptures, which contain the Will of God, than that this was the great and ultimate End of the *Omnipotent Creator*, in the framing the World, and particularly in the Creation of Mankind, to be happy both here and hereafter in a future state.

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CHAP.

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## CHAP. XIV.

*Some necessary Corollaries from the former Discourse; with the Conclusion, to all men to endeavour after Peace and Unity.*

FROM what has before been said, we may draw these necessary and practical Consequences and Conclusions.

First, That every man is obliged to yield obedience to Conscience, upon pain of Eternal Damnation: because every man is obliged, under that penalty, to walk according to the Scripture Rule, which is that by which Conscience judges every man, whether he does right or wrong: according to what St. *John* tells us, *If our heart, that is, our Conscience, condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, and most certainly will condemn us in that great and fearful Judgment-day. And whosoever violates a known command of Scripture, however he may colour it over with the fair pretence of Religion, yet, as

Rom. 3. 7. St. Paul saith, *Though the truth of God should abound, through my lie, unto his glory, yet I shall be also judged as a sinner.* And so shall all those, who with pretence of advancing God's glory and the truth, act contrary to the Rule of Truth and Righteousness. But if at the last it shall be found, that they have not been managed by Conscience, but Opinion and Persuasion, what can they expect, but the greatest severities, and insufferable torments and agonies of Conscience, *the worm that never dies* ? which should put all men upon a strict examination of themselves, especially those who pretend to be so much managed by Conscience ; whether it be a true and good Conscience, or onely these Deceivers and Usurpers, *Opinion and Persuasion.*

Secondly, it follows, That Indifferent things in Religious Worship, laying no further Obligation upon mens Consciences, than as they conduce to God's glory, and the happiness of the Universe ; and a Lawful Authority having a Power to put a final determination upon every man's private Judgment and Opinion, by declaring which

which of all these indifferent things they judge most conducive to God's glory, and the happiness of all those under their Jurisdiction, by promoting and preserving Peace, Unity, and Charity. Therefore that all persons who live under their Authority, are bound in Conscience to submit to those Determinations: and from thence-forward to esteem that, which before was in its own nature indifferent, to become necessary: because hereby many known Duties, and particularly that of Obedience to Magistrates ( without which, there can be no happiness on Earth ) are performed, to the satisfaction of an absolute and indispensable Obligation of Conscience.

Lastly, it follows, That all men are bound in Conscience to promote and endeavour the well-being of the Lawful Government under which they live; and, as much as in them lies, the happiness of all Mankind even here in this life. Nor can they follow the Dictates of true Religion or Conscience, whatever they may pretend or imagine, who for their private Opinions, make Parties, break Laws, despise Governments,

ments, give disturbances to the Peace and Security of their Native Countrey at home, and by promoting Faction, Dissention, and Division, give encouragement to our Enemies abroad. And by too just fears, from what has been, of what may be again, by the same ways and artifices, to make mens minds uneasy, and their lives unhappy. And should their Designs succeed a second time, to involve so many millions in the calamities of War, Confusion, Ruine, and Desolation.

These have been, and are the proper effects of Disobedience to Laws and Lawful Authority: and let all Dissenters look well to it, for they will find, here is no Conscience, no Religion to be found in such ways and ends, to which their Separation and Division do most infallibly lead them.

I wish I could conclude this Discourse with the most persuasive Arguments, and irresistible Reason. That all Christian People, and especially those Dissenters of these Nations, would seriously consider with themselves, whether these Discords and Differences about Religious affairs will in the end lead



lead them ; and in time turn back again, before they come to the dismal brink of those Precipices, Misery here, and Damnation hereafter ; which when by a too late Repentance they would avoid, they will not be able.

I wish they would no longer abuse that glorious name of *Conscience*, to countenance those Irreligious practises, of Disobedience, Uncharitableness, Dissention and Separation.

Let them consider, what it is in this World that is most desirable ; and whether they do not act point blank contrary to their own Interest and Happiness, both here and hereafter ; and directly against the publick Good of the Community of which they are Members ; and whether they may not justly fear, that by these dangerous and unlawful practises, they should so far exasperate Authority, as to exercise its utmost rigors and severities upon them, as being out of all hopes to reclaim them by gentle means, and justly jealous of their malicious, secret, and ill designs, in reality against the State, though the pretence be onely against the present Church and its Government.

Let

Let them consider, that if they desire to have peace within their private Walls, and plenteousness within their stately Palaces; if they desire to enjoy quiet of mind at home, tranquillity, peace, and unity one amongst another; that *Justice should run down as a River, and Righteousness as a mighty Stream. That Truth should spring out of the Earth, and Righteousness look down from Heaven.* That Mercy and Truth should meet together, Righteousness and Peace should kiss each other; and that glory may dwell in our Land. If they desire to be safe from intestine and domestick troubles, secure from Forreign force and invasion: to be loved, respected, and honoured by their Friends and Allies; dreaded by their greatest Enemies; to be great in Riches, great in Fame, and greater in all Goodness and Virtue, to be the joy and glory of all Lands. If they desire these, there is no way to obtain them, but by uniting our selves with this common Bond, and indissoluble Chain of a good Conscience, towards God and all men: which will teach every man his duty; keep every man quietly, peaceably, and contentedly

ly in his place and station; and secure unto us all those dear Delights of Humane Nature, Peace, Property, and Religion. If they desire these, thus must they endeavour after them; and if they will not endeavour after them, we cannot but judge, that they do not desire them. And I am sure, if they do not desire these blessings, both for themselves and all others, they neither deserve them, nor any love, pity, favour, countenance or kindness; but ought to be look'd upon, not as men, but fierce and savage Beasts, Wolves, Tigers, and Bears, given to Prey, Rapine, and Ravage; and they may easily guess what will follow, if once they come to be look'd upon and esteemed such.

Lastly, if they have any love or kindness for their Souls, or ever hope for eternal Salvation, it must not be expected without obedience to God, obedience to Government, and obedience to Conscience.

After all this I will hope that those happy days will shine upon us, in which we may say, *Our Jerusalem is built as a* Psal. 122,  
3.  
*City that is compact, or at unity with it*  
*self:*

*self: And that we shall be able to sing that glorious and triumphant Song of*  
Pfal. 48. *Praise and Thanksgiving, Great is the*  
1. *Lord, and greatly to be praised in the City of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion on the sides of the North the City of the great King. God is well known in her Palaces as a sure Refuge.*

To hasten which blessed and happy Age, let every good Christian lay to his helping hand, and his praying heart, by endeavouring to follow the example of the great Apostle St. *Paul*, which is the great Concern and Interest of every Man, both in reference to Happiness here and hereafter, *Keeping alwayes a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards all Men.*

F I N I S.

